THE AUTHOR

DENYS TEARE, the elder son of a village schoolmaster, was 21 years old when he parachuted into enemy territory, and in the year that followed he became automatically written off by the Air Ministry as "killed-in-action."

Immediately after his return to England he wrote an account of the adventurous 12 months spent evading capture behind the enemy lines. This manuscript was written purely for his own satisfaction and it was not until nine years later that, after much persuasion, a friend was allowed to read it, and having done so posted it to a publisher where it was promptly accepted.

Under the title "EVADER" the book has sold extensively throughout the British Empire and has been described as one of the most remarkable stories ever to come out of the war, for, within a few hours of leaving his burning aircraft, he had obtained civilian clothes and ultimately became an active figure in the French Resistance Movement under the false identity of Denis Lebenec; a name which even to-day is still mentioned in certain French cafes whenever the topic of conversation turns to escapes from the Gestapo.

Few men have adapted themselves to more varied occupations than Denys Teare. At the age of 15 he found Grammar School life tedious and entered the R.A.F. as a mechanic until, a few months later, his parents brought about his return to civilian life. Since then, amongst other forms of employment, he has spent war service in Bomber Command, three years as a bank clerk, a similar period driving fire-engines and launched various successful business projects.

During the last couple of years he has carried out a research concerning unorthodox healing and its association with witchcraft. "FOLK-DOCTOR'S ISLAND" gives a condensed story of his findings on this unusual and mysterious subject.

The cover illustration, by which distances over land and sea may be measured by two separate scales, is reproduced from a map of the 16th/17th century by kind co-operation of the Manx Museum and National Trust.

visualise the life of the inhabitants in days gone by, when smuggling was a recognised livelihood, and when villagers lived in fear of the curses of the witches.

Throughout my life in England, I had borne the inconvenience of possessing such an unfamiliar name that it invariably required to be spelt out letter by letter whenever quoted. Frequently this has been followed by the question: "Where does a name like that originate?" In reply to this I have always quoted my father's words: "It's a good old Manx name from the North of the Island."

Any person conversant with Manx history and folklore, however, is aware of the accounts of remarkable deeds performed at one time by members of the Teare family. They were for many generations held in very high esteem for their uncanny ability to heal sickness in both animals and humans.

Greatest of Manx Witch-Doctors

An eminent present-day writer* states "Many of the not-too-old folk on the island to-day can remember the family of the greatest of the Manx witch-doctors—Teare of Ballawhane, Kirk Andreas. Teare was sent for from all parts of the island, and his cures were alleged to be amazing."

Even when Feltham visited the island in 1797, he found the family tradition already well established. In his book "Tour through the Isle of Man," when writing of Mr. John Teare of Ballawhane, he states: "This gentleman's family has long been in possession of some valuable medicinal preparations, which they distribute generously to the relief of the poor."

*Archdeacon E. H. Stenning . . Isle of Man (The County Books)

Those two statements alone would surely be sufficient to create a thirst in any person for further knowledge of his ancestors, especially when it is realised that the term "witch-doctor" is used in the most complimentary manner, for in those days, this highly superstitious race regarded the majority of sicknesses to have been brought about by the evil wishes of the witches. Consequently, the only man who could break the spell and nurse the patient back to health could quite accurately be described as a "witch-doctor." Over a long period, however, other writers have referred to the particular healer of their time as "Fairy Doctor," "Charm Doctor," "Seer," "Old Wise Man," and even "Teare the Bonesetter."

The purpose of my visit, therefore, was to delve through ancient records in the Manx Museum, refer to church registers, and chat with some of the older inhabitants to glean as much information as possible. Then by carefully sifting fact from fiction I hoped to arrive at some conclusion that would reveal how this strange tradition had been established.

Was some very extensive and successful knowledge of herbalism and folk-medicine passed down from generation to generation? Were the "Old Wise Men" the forerunners of the twentieth-century psychiatrists, gaining the confidence of their patients with the aid of charms and incantations which are replaced to-day by university degrees and comfortable consultation couches? This possibility seems interesting when one considers the fact that there are said to be more people hospitalised in England to-day with nervous and mental disorders than with all other ailments combined.

Faith Healing or Inbred Ability?

Was their success due to faith healing, and their reputation established by some very businesslike publicity and showmanship? Or did the family really possess some mysterious inbred ability to heal? If so, has that ability been completely lost to medical science to-day?

The Mona's Queen had seemed quite small and dainty as she eased gently away from a huge Trans-Atlantic liner moored at an adjoining berth alongside the landing stage. Cutting cleanly through the water of the Mersey Estuary, she seemed to assume an air of supremacy as she steamed past the rugged assortment of tankers, cargo boats, tramp steamers and dredgers which make the Mersey one of the world's busiest rivers.

The Irish Sea was perfectly calm. As I stood on deck in glorious sunshine, watching the industrial landscape of Liverpool slide from view, it seemed hardly possible that these same peaceful waters could be lashed by such a furious gale as that on one winter's night in 1909, when the little I.O.M. steamer Ellan Vannin was lost at the mouth of the river. Then, a certain Captain Teare, his crew of twenty and eleven passengers perished after an agonising voyage from Ramsey in the merciless storm. After half a century the cause of the tragedy remains unsolved.

This is the only peacetime disaster involving loss of life which has befallen the I.O.M. Steam Packet Company throughout its history, and though many ships have been launched since, the name Ellan

Vannin is one of the few that the company has not repeated.

Looking round at my fellow-passengers, I surmised that several were possibly students and masters returning to King William's College after the Easter recess; others were R.A.F. personnel no doubt stationed on the island, and the remainder seemed mostly businessmen. They probably made this crossing several times each year, but when a murmur went through the ship that the people looking for'ard had sighted land, there were very few who did not leave their seats to take a glance at the distant shape appearing on the horizon. It was now three hours since we had set course from England, and many people had left the lounge to stretch their legs and enjoy the air which always smells so fresh and clean from the deck of a moving vessel.

As the minutes ticked by, the thin grey outline first materialised into the shape of hills, then a patchwork of fields became distinguishable at their base, and now the bright little specks of the white-washed buildings on this summer playground were picked out by the bright sunlight. This was the little island where the inhabitants seem to have acquired a reputation for magical powers many centuries ago.

Horrid Powers of "Impious Race"

The bard who accompanied Hakon, King of Norway, in his expedition to these parts in the year 1203 A.D., wrote as follows:—

> "Now our deep inquiring sovereign encountered the horrid powers of enchantment and the abominations of an impious race. The troubled

flood tore many fair galleys from their moorings, and swept them anchorless before the waves. A magic-raised watery tempest blew upon our warriors, ambitious of conquest, and against the floating habitations of the brave."†

Dozens of seagulls had flown out to escort the ship into Douglas and were hovering alongside, swooping down continually to catch the pieces of biscuit I threw to them from the deck. This was the delightful approach to the island which would thrill thousands of holiday-makers during the summer months, making their vacation just that little bit more enjoyable than travelling by rail or road to an English resort. I could have taken advantage of the regular air service from the mainland, but I preferred to enjoy the pleasant experience of entry into Douglas Bay, and it would have been far more difficult to adjust my thoughts to years gone by had I set foot on Manxland less than an hour after leaving the hustle and bustle of Liverpool Airport.

As my steamer glided gently into harbour, with engines now just barely turning over, the first of many romantic island stories came to my mind. On the port bow stood the Fort Anne Hotel, reputed to have been built for a runaway Irish heiress who was to be disinherited if she ever slept on any but Irish soil. The tale is told that beneath the foundations lies a boat-load of specially imported Irish earth. For many years the incoming mail boat has been traditionally welcomed, or perhaps I should say repelled, by the firing of a small cannon from the hotel. During my visit I might find out more details of this custom.

†Poem of Snorro Sturlson (Johnstone's Translation)

To starboard, standing on an island of jagged rocks inside the bay, lies the Tower of Refuge, built by Sir William Hillary, who later founded the Royal National Life-boat Institution. He was in residence at the Fort Anne Hotel at the time, and was appalled at the frequent loss of fishermen's lives so near the safety of the harbour.

By now the Mona's Queen was approaching King Edward VIII Pier, a solid concrete arm built in 1936 and increasing the shelter afforded by the harbour. Even this modern engineering structure will be looked upon with intrigue by generations to come, for nowhere else in the British Isles can be found a public work or building officially named after the king who was never crowned.

The engines ceased, ropes were thrown and gangways lowered. I set forth ashore on the Island of Legend, wondering from which part of this harbour my great-grandfather stepped aboard the paddle-steamer for England years ago.

CHAPTER TWO

First Evening

Having reached my destination after a safe and pleasant voyage, I began to formulate within my mind the outline of the task that lay ahead. Basically, my visit to the island was for the purpose of finding as much detail as possible about my namesakes of bygone days, and to discover the secrets of their incredible cures. In the course of this, my enquiries would be closely associated with that vast and mysterious subject . . . WITCHCRAFT.

This is a most complicated and extensive subject, its different applications in possibly every country in the world; and its recognition almost throughout the history of man has made me realise that although I have always had a more than just a casual interest in it, each small amount of knowledge gained from time to time only served to make me more aware that a really sound knowledge of the entire subject would require the full-time study of a lifetime.

It was not my intention, therefore, to write about the mystic deeds of the ancient Greeks, the Druids and all the solemn rites performed in unearthly ceremonies from pre-historic days; nor even to express a personal opinion on these matters until such time as I had become much more conversant with all the complicated aspects involved.

As long ago as 1338, Matholine, Governor of the Isle of Man, wrote a treatise against the practice of witchcraft, so prevalent at that time (Sacheverell's Account of the I.O.M.). In spite of all the witch-hunting purges that swept through Europe up to the

latter centuries, it would seem that the fire so brutally stamped out in larger countries still smouldered on the little isle, almost to the present day.

Though wishing to avoid the complicated issues into which I could so easily become involved, it is nevertheless essential that I should differentiate between the doings of the so-called Magicians, Enchanter or Enchantresses, Sorcerers or Sorceresses, Wizards and Witches, as apart from the profession of the Teares of Ballawhane whereby they merited the title "Witch-Doctor."

The Magicians, Enchanters and Enchantresses belonged to a rather high order of things. They had spirits and demons at their command, and were proficient in the occult sciences, but they would not condescend to the minor doings practised by the forementioned. The special attribute of the Sorcerers and Witches was alleged to be the possession of power to cast the "Evil Eye." In consequence, any sickness arising in a family, could be very easily attributed to the local witch. This belief also extended to the livestock in the fields, and some unfortunate villagers have borne the accusation, and even suffered death at the stake, simply by the evidence of neighbours who had attributed the reduction in milk yield in cattle, or of eggs from their poultry, to the casting of the Evil Eye.

People With "The Evil Eye"

This drastic treatment, at one time commonplace in England, and to a later date in Scotland, was not enforced with such ferocity by the Manx-folk. They had their methods by which the person responsible

could be identified, but the extreme penalty was seldom brought into operation. One very simple method was the burning of a deceased animal at the roadside—the first person to pass along that way was said to have been responsible for its death. Having discovered the possessor of the Evil Eye, the next move was to ensure that no other animals became affected. This was done by picking dust from beneath the Witch's feet, or from the threshold of his or her door, and rubbing it into the backs of the animals requiring protection.

This all seems rather simple-minded, but it is certainly within the last hundred years that a certain farmer came at cross-purposes with the law for burning a dead calf at the roadside.

It was inevitable that the procedures such as this should sometimes prove of no avail, and recourse had to be made to the practitioners known as "Charmers" or "Witch-doctors," whose counterparts were common in every English village at one time. These Charmers, whose existence is recognised by almost every authority on Manx folk-lore, could be either male or female. Fer-obbee were the men charmers, and Ben-obbee the women. Certain ceremonies were performed and certain formulas used for the purpose of curing both animal and human ailments; they also made use of their powers to counteract the spells of Fairies, as well as those of the malevolent Sorcerers or Witches.

There were several Charm-doctors in various parts of the island. In addition to using charms, some administered medicinal herbs, and applied fasting spittle, the virtues of which were held in very high esteem. They were all, more or less, tainted with the suspicion of dabbling in sorcery and witchcraft on their

own account, but as their powers on the whole were used for good purposes, they were tolerated.

Out of the superstition, confusion and ignorance of that bygone era one important discovery became outstandingly noticeable. The simple, hard-working farmers and fishermen became aware that up in the sparsely populated northern tip of the island, at a place called Ballawhane, there dwelt a witch-doctor whose ability to restore the health of both animals and humans greatly exceeded that of any of his compatriots. This was the start of the family tradition which became stronger and more established as the knowledge gained by one generation was passed on to the next.

I booked into an hotel on the Loch Promenade, Douglas, threw my briefcase on the bed, had a wash, and went downstairs for a meal. By this time it was too late to visit the Museum, so I decided that the story of my ancestors could wait until the following morning.

I Contact a Friend

Nevertheless, I thought the remainder of the evening could perhaps be spent pleasantly in the company of a friend who lived in Douglas. I phoned his number, and as soon as I heard Tom's voice I knew his first question would be:

"Where are you speaking from, Denys?" and that this would be followed immediately by "When did you come over?" in case I had dared to land on the island and delay the courtesy of contacting him for more than a few hours.

"Edna and my daughter are at the cinema just

round the corner from your hotel, and I'm picking them up in the car at eight o'clock. I'll see you then!"

Replacing the receiver, I knew that my evening's entertainment was assured. Tom, a good conversationalist, was a true Manxman, born and bred on the island and proud of the fact. He was a very outspoken, matter-of-fact businessman. A Thomas of the doubting tradition, whom I knew from previous experience to enjoy nothing better than a really good argument on almost any subject, he was a difficult man to convince unless your point of view could be fully supported with accurate statistics. I had no intention that evening of becoming involved in any discussion concerning the pros and cons of unorthodox healing, for I had not yet acquired a sufficiently extensive knowledge of the subject.

We met at the appointed time, and after the customary enquiries about family health back home had been exchanged, Tom asked:

"Have you seen the Hesperus?"

"Do you mean the wreck?" I replied facetiously, and thinking he might be referring to his own little sailing boat lying in the harbour.

The look he gave me in reply soon made me realise my mistake. On this little island the coming and going of boats had been of vital importance for hundreds of years: no doubt my companion could give details of almost every craft that had entered Douglas Harbour during the last twelve months; every boatman in the town knew that the Hesperus was moored alongside King Edward VIII Pier.

Tom pointed out the trim-looking vessel, well fitted out and immaculately painted.

"Isn't she a beauty?"

He spoke with the affection of a man with salt water running through his veins, and continued:

"She's the Northern Lights Commission supply and maintenance boat; she goes to the lighthouses all round the British Isles." Then I understood the reverence with which he regarded her.

From the quayside we motored to the outskirts of the town, and while his wife Edna prepared supper in the kitchen of their comfortable semi-detached home, Tom and I chatted by the fire. He told me of his most recent success in using cine-camera and tape-recorder to produce a documentary film of bird life around the jagged coast of his native land. This was his relaxation: fishing, bird-watching, and getting "back to nature," away from the daily worries and anxieties of an executive position in a busy office.

What Brings You Here?

I had been in his company about an hour when his curiosity forced him to ask outright, "Tell me, Denys, what brings you to the island at this time of the year?"

I had never heard Tom express his opinions on fairies, witchcraft and other allied subjects, but I had anticipated a certain amount of blunt criticism and possibly ridicule when I replied, feeling slightly embarrassed: "I've come to see what truth lies behind the stories about the Teares of Ballawhane."

His reaction amazed me. He immediately began to talk of his own personal visits, in time of family sickness, to an old Charmer, for apparently the ancient

A weather beaten old character in an isolated cottage.

art of charming ailments is still actually recognised and respected by some folk on the island to-day.

The first experience he mentioned concerned his wife. She was on one occasion suffering from quinsy, this being the old name for acute tonsilitis, particularly that form in which an abscess develops in the throat. Her neck was swollen very painfully, and she could swallow only sips of water, and that with considerable discomfort. The family doctor was attending her each day, but after a week of treatment she had not eaten, and seemed to be making no improvement.

Edna too was a native of the Isle of Man, brought up in an atmosphere of superstition and strange beliefs, so in desperation she appealed to Tom to get her a "charm." At that time his views on charm-healing were rather cynical, but he was gravely concerned about his wife's discomfort. She had only made a small request, so obviously the sole course open to any devoted husband was to put aside his own misgivings and comply with her wishes.

In the course of his normal business routine he frequently had occasion to travel round the island, so on leaving home the following morning, he promised Edna that if possible he would call upon a charm doctor during the day; failing that, he would do so in the evening.

The Charm

Fortunately an opportunity arose first thing in the morning, and ten o'clock found him, tongue in cheek, consulting a weather-beaten old character in an isolated little cottage clinging to a grassy slope, who was reputed to be "very good with charms."

The quaint old body listened as the symptoms of Edna's misfortune were explained, then withdrew, muttering some strange incantation, to reappear a few minutes later saying:—

"Go home, my son; your wife will be healed now."

No herbs were prescribed, no treatment advised, for this was treatment by "charm," and the spell had already been broken.

Tom was not in the least impressed, and left to resume his day's work feeling rather foolish, but comforted by the thought that at least he had carried out his wife's desires. That evening, however, as he walked down the garden path, Edna opened the door to greet him with the words: "I suddenly felt better at ten o'clock this morning, got out of bed, and since then have made myself chipped potatoes for dinner."

The family doctor, very naturally, claimed credit for his own prescriptions, and stated that the time factor involved was purely coincidental. But the patient herself certainly had no doubts about which practitioner had brought about the cure.

It seemed incredible to sit there listening to an intelligent couple, in their own twentieth century home, with its refrigerator, telephone, television and so on, relating with such obvious sincerity their tale of white magic that I thought belonged only to an age gone by. My visit that evening had been intended to be a purely social one, but I took out a notebook and was soon furiously jotting down details on the very subject I had come over from England to study. The tattered, dusty records I had come to scrutinise were to be only the start of my story. Now I found that

"The Bashegondhoo."

accounts of strange healing ability could be recorded right up to the present day.

With the speed at which my hosts were talking I seemed to have an ailment rapidly developing—what would a charm doctor do for a case of writer's cramp?

The Sty

Shortly after the quinsy case, a troublesome sty had developed in Tom's eye. Wishing to get rid of this painful embarrassment as soon as possible, he took the opportunity of putting the powers of the charm doctor to the test once more.

"Can you give me a charm to get rid of the sty in my eye?" he said to the shabby little figure, bent with age, but with little more than a casual glance, who turned away and took a few paces up the hill, muttering as before. Tom stood patiently waiting and wondering if some minor miracle were about to take place as the minutes ticked slowly by until the "doctor" reappeared.

"Go home my son," he said, slowly and deliberately, "you have not got a sty."

Doubts immediately sprang into Tom's mind as he stood there in pain, his bad eye almost closed, but the thin little voice continued, "You have a small growth. Go and see a specialist, it will have to be cut out."

Later that day my friend reclined beneath the bright electric light and heard the cultured voice of a figure in a spotless white overall say, "We have a cyst here, it will have to be removed surgically."

Apparently the old charm doctor knew his own limitations!

My little survey was to prove even more interesting than I had anticipated, and I realised that my Manx friend could be of invaluable assistance to me. Not only did he possess a knowledge of most of the island, but he could also recall many incidents from his childhood, and speak quite a lot of the old phrases and sayings in the almost extinct Manx language.

He quoted the words his grandmother often spoke in her native tongue as she listened outside her cottage door; these being translated mean "The beast of the cliff is speaking and we shall have rain."

The noise of the "beast" can still be heard from that particular spot before rainfall, for it is only with a prevailing south-west wind that the eerie echoing of the waves dashing against the rocks of a nearby cove were audible.

The "Bashegondhoo"

Further round the coast, sacrifices were thrown from passing fishing boats until quite recent years, to the "Bashegondhoo," another beast of the cliff, who howled from a cave at the water's edge. The explanation for this is very similar, for when the mouth of this cave is obscured by the tide, to a certain height, and the wind blows across from a certain direction at a precise speed, a sound resembling some unearthly monster can still be heard.

Tom remembered hurrying home from school before dusk fell for fear of the "Kallagh-ny-drummond," the spirit who brought evil, and whistled down from the chimney tops on wintry nights.

The time had passed quickly, and it was well after midnight when I returned to my hotel, but before retiring I recalled yet another instance of these

spine-chilling sounds. It was at Kirk Maughold, where a "Buggane," or Manx giant, was believed to inhabit the Gob-na-scute (waterfall), and was particularly interesting because I had already read an account of how, a century ago, the villagers became so disturbed by the terrifying wails that they sent for Witch-doctor Teare of Ballawhane to investigate. Here again the diagnosis was that a strong wind, when blowing from a particular direction, was transforming the cavities among the rocks into a supernatural organ. The fact that Old Ballawhane, though working in conjunction with one of his compatriots, was unable to stop this uncanny noise is recorded in the following poem:—

THE GOB-NA-SCUTE BUGGANE

The story went that once in olden time,
A murder was committed on the moor,
And that the man supposed to have done the crime
Vanished from earth and nee'r was heard no more,
But strange to say, ere he his exit made,
His ghost was banished to the Gob-na-scute,
There to remain, and never to be laid
By magic art from its dark ghostly nook;
Though Ballyockey and OLD BALLA-WHANE
Tried their united art for many an age,
To put to flight old Gob-na-Scute's Buggane.
But he was proof from their witch-searching page.

(Kennish, "Mona's Isle and other Poems," 1844.)

Incidentally, Old Teare's remedy for getting rid of wind was:—

CROYMMEY SHEESE AS CUR SHELLEY FO CHLAGH.
SON PIAN 'SY LHIATTEE,
TE CUR ASS YNNYD GHEAY AYNS Y MINNAGH.

This Manx language, though still used at the annual Tynwald Ceremony, is almost obsolete, but a modern interpretation is roughly:—

"Take a walk down the garden, stand to the right of a small white stone; pick it up with your right hand, spit on it, return it to the ground on your right side, using your left hand."

(I know of no better way for the release of flatulency in the colon, even to-day!)

Mr Denys Teare's Cottage at Cranstal was a victim of the storm. The gable collapsed.

CHAPTER THREE

Visit to the Museum

Refreshed by a good night's sleep, and fortified with a bacon and egg breakfast, I took a brisk walk along the promenade, deeply inhaling the fresh salt air, then turned inland and began to climb with eager anticipation up the steep incline of the street that leads to the Douglas Museum, where I hoped to spend the rest of the day learning about the old folk-doctors.

As I ascended, step by step, up the footpath so steep that a handrail is provided, I could not help thinking that really the whole of this fascinating island is not unlike a museum, for it virtually teems with places, objects and sights of historic interest. But I did not intend to let my interest wander from the subject during this particular visit: the many relics from Celtic and Viking times in the form of stones and burial grounds, etc., scattered round the island were of no particular concern at the moment, not even the strange and wonderful Manx "Stonehenge" at Maughold, dating back to 2,000 B.C., for my research concerned far more recent happenings.

There are so many romantic incidents of history which are associated with the island that I feel sure that if they were given a mere fraction of the publicity devoted to some notable birthplaces, etc., in other countries, the holiday-makers would find it overwhelming and hardly believable.

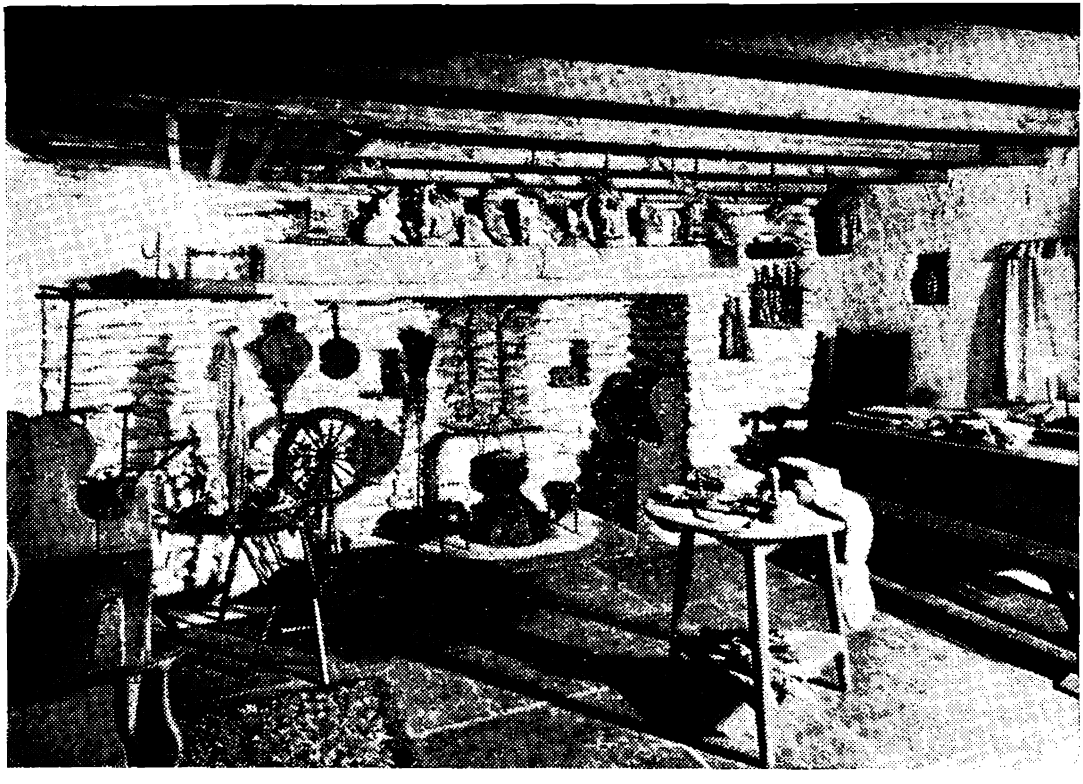
However, this is not the case, and the visitors come over in their thousands each year to enjoy the sands and scenery, blissfully unaware that on the few square miles of this rocky isle there once trod both

Capt. Bligh and the mutinous Fletcher Christian, whose descendants still live to-day on an island somewhere in the Pacific; or Capt. Miles Standish, who took the Pilgrims across the Atlantic in the Mayflower; or Colonel Mark Wilks, Governor, who guarded Napoleon at St. Helena; or William Kennish, the inventor, who plotted the Panama Canal, together with many more outstanding people whose names appear in history inaccurately described as Englishmen.

The Museum Cannon

The Manx Museum must at one time, have acquired a pair of cannon, and like many other institutions in the British Isles, having acquired them, didn't know quite where to place them, so they became parked in the open air outside the front door. There is no notice to arouse the interest of the museum's visitors to these two ungainly chunks of scrap metal; but like so many objects on the island, if one bothers to make enquiries about how or why they happen to be there, one runs straight into another stranger-than-fiction story.

I remember once reading about these two old cannon that about a century ago the Admiralty must have apparently been stocktaking, and found that on the island were six muzzle-loading cannon dating back to the 16th century. Amazingly, the barrels were noticed to be rifled, this discovery so intrigued the Royal Artillery Institute, Woolwich, that they took four of them for preservation as the world's earliest known examples of rifling. Perhaps some enthusiastic



Interior of a Manx Cottage. [By courtesy of the Manx Museum

rifleman attending the Small Bore Shooting Festival in Douglas one year might take the matter up, and try to find how, and by whom, these weapons were made.

Pushing open the door, and stepping into the entrance hall, I realised that if I were to make any real progress in my research, I must disassociate myself entirely with all the interesting relics on view, and concentrate my thoughts solely on hunting the witch-doctors.

A major reorganisation programme was in process, and the completed portions of the building were already looking most attractive. So that the visitor will appreciate what wonderful transformation had taken place in the building, there is a HALT sign erected at the end of one corridor, and the arms of a sign-post point in opposite directions, one towards the Old, where a dismal, dusty collection of old weapons and suchlike are exhibited in old-fashioned show-cases, and the other leads to the New, a well lit, brightly decorated hall where objects, models, etc., are displayed in a most attractive manner.

Wandering slowly from gallery to gallery, I became aware that I was probably the only visitor in the building at that time, and found the tendency to wish to move silently on tiptoe across the polished floors even stronger than I had previously experienced in museums or art galleries.

One room is devoted to a comprehensive display of early maps of the Isle of Man, the centre of the room being occupied by a large relief map with a scale of six inches to the mile, from which I could gain an excellent birds-eye view of the island, taking in at a glance the principal towns, bays, and headlands, together with parish boundaries and major roads.

I soon located the parish of Kirk Andreas (Church of St. Andrew), whence the old witch-doctors came, even on the oldest maps. There was a pillar in another part of the museum bearing Roman inscriptions, found in the village dating back to 560 A.D.

Andreas is situated in the northern tip of the island, on what is called the Northern Plain, beyond the T.T. circuit, and in consequence lies in territory into which the average holiday-maker never ventures. The parish is about six miles in length from north to south, and maybe four-and-half miles across, being bounded by the sea in the north, and the parishes of Lezayre, Bride and Jurby to the south, east and west. A couple of miles further north than the village itself I could see on various maps a small cluster of buildings which bore the title "BALLAWHANE." It was obviously a very small community, but at that moment I felt as though there was no place on earth I would rather visit (which indeed I would be doing in the very near future), than that little group of dots on the maps from whence the Teares of Ballawhane had once performed their amazing feats of healing for so many generations.

I realised, of course, that even in that isolated corner of the island the present inhabitants must have been overtaken by modernisation to a certain extent. Whilst in the museum, however, I had the opportunity of gaining the atmosphere of rural life of a century past, for having passed through the Folk-life Gallery where the furniture, tools and utensils used by generations of Manx people are displayed, and the Costume Rooms, where their dress is illustrated, I reached the point which must surely be the highlight of any conducted museum tour for the summer

season. It is a full-sized reconstruction of a Manx farmhouse, complete with every detail of the then contemporary furniture and possessions as if still occupied by a humble Manx farmer and his family of the last century. A cooking pot hangs from a chain over the turf fire in the open hearth, the wool and flax lie ready for the spinning wheel, and the light from a lantern gleams upon an array of crockery and jugs on the shelves of a dresser.

Most farmhouses of that time were of one storey only, and adjoining the kitchen can be seen the bedroom with its handwoven sheets and blankets, a candle, and even a piece of string leading from the bed to the nearby cradle, by which the "little perisher" could be rocked to sleep without Mum or Dad leaving the warmth of their own bed. I spent quite a few minutes standing in the doorway of that bedroom, for this was surely as near as could possibly be obtained to an exact set-up of the conditions under which the old Teares performed their miracles.

Place Of The Healers

The whole museum was in absolute silence, and as this model farmhouse was constructed in a secluded corner of the basement, my thoughts were undisturbed. Standing there in peaceful solitude, I was able to allow my imagination to run freely back through time, visualising myself in the role of one of the bygone healers. I would have had a few crude instruments, maybe a thermometer, and some form of stethoscope, an assortment of different herbs in bottles, some home-made medicines and ointments,

and nothing else except the knowledge in my head and the skill in my fingers. Not only would I have to make a diagnosis and prescribe the remedy, I would also have to act as herbal chemist and carefully blend the required concoctions: all this to be carried out without the assistance of facilities which are taken more or less for granted to-day.

I began to wonder how many cases of sickness there had lain over a period of years on this particular old bed before me, how many children had been born on it, and how many people had passed away on it: rather a morbid thought, nevertheless an indisputable fact, for every doctor and every surgeon is fighting a losing battle against the inevitable end for each of us. Something about this imitation home seemed to be very real, and I had stood there in deep meditation for several minutes before I realised that it was the fact that standing against the wall of the kitchen was an old grandfather clock, steadily ticking away the seconds as accurately to-day as he did maybe a hundred years ago.

Moving away from the farmhouse along a corridor, I came once more to the bright and airy atmosphere of a modern building with an abundance of healthy window space. Due to the structure being erected on the side of a steep slope, what was the basement when approached from the front of the museum, was actually ground-floor level in the new extensions at the rear.

It was here I found the National Library of the Isle of Man, named in honour of the famous Manx historian A. W. Moore. It contains printed and manuscript records of all branches of study relating to the island, together with newspaper files dating back

to the 18th century, maps, plans, prints, photographs and microfilms.

I met Mr W. R. Serjeant, the Librarian-Archivist, and outlined the purpose of my visit. "In order to ascertain what is truth and what is exaggeration, it is essential that I find some form of documentary evidence written, not after the death of these mystics, but by people who had witnessed these minor miracles with their own eyes," I stated.

"Have you read Feltham's book of 1797?" asked Mr Serjeant, referring to his index system, and drawing out a card marked "Teare of Ballawhane."

"Yes," I replied, "but apart from whetting my appetite by his mention that the family healing tradition had existed for several generations, he gives no other details."

"I think Joseph Train actually interviewed one of the 'doctors'," said the librarian, referring to a writer who is probably best known to the world by his close association and considerable correspondence with, Sir Walter Scott. "Would you care to look through these two volumes while I see what else I can find," he continued, passing over Volume I and Volume II entitled "An Historical and Statistical Account of the Isle of Man" which bore the date 1845.

"Fairy Doctor"

I thanked him, and quickly glancing through the index I soon spotted the following:—

Volume II.

Seer, TEARE, the fairy doctor ..... page 160

His supposed power over the fruits
of the earth and birds of the air ... page 161
Account of interview with ..... page 162

This mention of power over plants and birds seemed likely to open up an even more incredible aspect of my enquiry of which I had hitherto been unaware, but apparently the most eminent authority on Manx history at that time had considered that this strange phenomena centred upon Ballawhane to be such an important feature of Manxland that it merited three-page representation in his account.

Feltham's visit to the island had taken place almost fifty years previously, so it was quite possible that he and Train had spoken to two different generations, father and son respectively, but this was a point to be sorted out with the aid of the parish register at Kirk Andreas.

Train uses the description "a very extensive dealer in propitiatory charms and in antidotes to occult infection," and goes on to say, "when the prescriptions of other practitioners fail in producing the desired effect, this famous person is applied to. The messenger that is dispatched to him on such occasions is neither to eat nor to drink by the way, nor even to tell any person his mission. The recovery is said to be perceptible from the time that the case is stated to him."

These few lines bore a great similarity to the words of Tom and his wife on the previous evening when we were discussing "charm" healing, and it would appear that possibly Feltham and Train had met, almost fifty years apart, practitioners of two different generations, no doubt father and son.

"He was mounted on a little Manx pony."

Feltham's "Ballawhane" was "a gentleman whose family had long been in possession of some valuable medicinal preparations, which they distribute generously to the relief of the poor"—a description that bears strong resemblance to that of a very experienced herbal doctor. Mr Train's man from Ballawhane, however, does not seem to actually use any herbal concoctions. Perhaps the family tradition of hereditary ability to heal sickness had been built up so strongly by previous generations that he was able to gain satisfactory results by relying on a form of faith healing, which is perhaps what healing by charms really amounts to.

Charm Healing

I do not wish to decry or ridicule in any way the ability of a charm-healer, particularly as I am in possession of the charm with which to staunch the flow of blood. This merely consists of a few words written on a piece of paper, that have been passed from mouth to mouth through many generations. I accepted the paper with the sincerity with which it was given, and have no intention of dishonouring the privilege bestowed upon me by allowing these few quaint words to appear in print. This may sound like some phoney conjuring trick, but in actual fact, I look upon it from a very logical point of view. If you yourself, yes, you the reader, happened to receive a serious cut, and you knew there was going to be a considerable time lapse before you could be taken to a hospital, you would be very worried indeed, possibly on the verge of panic, and the more acute the state of your anxiety became,

the faster your heart would beat in fear, and your condition would deteriorate accordingly. If, however, you still had one straw to clutch at, in the form of some individual at hand about whom you had heard tales of an ability to staunch the flow of blood, in spite of your previous disbelief, I feel sure that in desperation you would be only too eager to accept the possibility of your life being saved by a "charm." Once you had accepted the belief that the owner of the charm could be of help to you, his presence before you would have a tranquilising effect, the charmer would put you at ease, the hysteria would subside, your pulse-rate would become more normal, and in consequence, the bleeding would become less profuse—the charm would be working.*

Charm healing of this nature was carried out quite extensively in England up to the turn of the present century, when such simple little ideas for easing suffering fell into obscurity, to be lost for ever after a harmless service to humanity for perhaps a thousand years. Some very remarkable instances of this sort of miraculous healing are on record, for which it does seem impossible to produce a reasonable explanation. I had thought it all belonged to the mysterious past, and was indeed surprised to learn from Tom and Edna that here on the Isle of Man it still holds a place in modern life.

Returning to the Ballawhane of Mr Train's day, it would appear that his charm-healing, auto-suggestion, maybe hypnotic treatment (more about that later), call

* Just to put your mind at ease, in case we should ever meet in some circumstance of emergency, I wish to tell you that I am also capable of applying a tourniquet and bandage as per instruction received in the Ambulance Brigade of St. John.

it what you like, was so successful that throughout the island he became accredited with having supernatural powers, about which Train writes:

> "In Spring, when the doctor is called to attend professionally at more places than he can accomplish at the time required, many very respectable farmers will suspend for days the operation of sowing, although the land should be fully prepared and even in the most precarious weather, rather than run the risk of committing the seed to the soil without his accustomed benediction."

And even after the planting of the seed, he could still exert his influence:—

> "It will be seen from the following anecdote, related to me at the place where the circumstance occurred, that Seer Teare has power over the birds of the air as well as over the beasts of the field. In July, 1833, the great fairy doctor had just entered the house of Mr Faragher, inn-keeper, at Laxey, and seated himself in an old armchair when he was greeted by the landlord, 'Well, Ballawhane, I am glad to see you; my little field of wheat is nearer ripe than any grain in the glen, but the sparrows feed on it in such flocks that they will have all the grain carried away before the straw is fit for the sickle.'
>
> "'I am quite aware of that,' replied Mr Teare, 'and am just come to try if I can put them away for you.' After returning from the field where he had performed some ceremonious rites, he remarked to the inn-keeper, 'These sparrows know well to take advantage of corn that has not been

seen by me before it was sown, but I have sent them away now, and I think they will not again venture into your field this season.'

"This singular exorcism of the sparrows soon became known throughout Laxey: the paper-makers and the miners in the neighbourhood were the only persons who had any doubt as to the doctor's power in such matters, and for the purpose of satisfying themselves, they narrowly watched the field during the remaining part of the season. To their great surprise, however, though the sparrows flocked round Mr Faragher's park in greater numbers than before, casting many a wistful eye to the waving grain, yet not one of them dared to enter the charmed precincts."

The reason why the paper-makers and the miners would doubt the fairy doctor's ability would be because they were mostly foreign tradesmen who'd come over from England and Ireland, and had not been brought up in the atmosphere of strange beliefs like the natives.

Train gives quite a detailed report of the first occasion that he came in contact with the fairy doctor, from which it is possible to gain a mental picture of the quaint little character, as follows:—

"The first time I saw him he was mounted on a little Manks pony that seemed aware of its master having neither whip nor spur to quicken its pace as it moved very tardily along the way side. The seer is a little man, far advanced into the vale of life; in appearance he was healthy and active: he wore a low-crown slouched hat, evidently too large for his head, with a broad brim: his coat, of an old-fashioned make, with his vest and breeches,

were all of loaghtyn wool, which had never undergone any process of dyeing: his shoes also were of a colour not to be distinguished from his stockings, which were likewise of loaghtyn wool."

Nowadays, unfortunately, both the fairy doctor's mode of transport and also his source of clothing are almost extinct. I had noticed a fine stuffed specimen of a loaghtyn ram as I walked through the museum, quite a handsome looking beast though resembling the mountain goat family rather than a sheep. One of the reasons this breed has become almost entirely replaced by its English cousins is probably because of its extreme activeness and agility; it is said to be almost impossible to keep it within a fenced field. The most distinctive feature about them is the fact that a loaghtyn ram grows four large re-curved horns (sometimes even six), and as I looked into the glassy eyes, unflinching in their sightless gaze, I could almost imagine him saying "These things used to give me terrific headaches until I started to use X brand tablets"!

Train was introduced to Mr Teare by a certain Mr Kelly, who at that time was the Chief Magistrate of Castletown. Using the title "Great Fairy-doctor of Kirk Andreas," he speaks of the pithy quaintness in the doctor's conversation, and says his answers to questions were couched in idiomatic proverbialisms. The conversation must have developed into a discussion concerning the difference between black witch-craft and the variety of "magic for the good of mankind" as practised by the doctor himself, whereupon the magistrate gave the old man the opportunity to affirm his complete dissociation with any undesirable

spirits, by saying to him: "I know, Mr Teare, that by probing the secret springs of nature you either accelerate, retard or turn aside at pleasure the natural course of events, but I want you to take oath before me, in the presence of this stranger, that you never call evil spirits to your assistance." The oath was thereupon administered before the magistrate with due solemnity.

When the old gentleman said that in the course of his professional business he travelled far more miles per annum than any other person on the island, Train expressed his surprise that a person of his advanced years could be capable of enduring such fatigue, he replied, "The crab that lies always in its hole is never fat."

This expression seemed rather difficult to understand, for at this stage in my enquiry I had gained the impression that the old folk-doctors had lived rather an austere life, and that much of their work was carried out free of charge.

CHAPTER FOUR

Frustration

Tom and I met at a pre-arranged time and headed out of Douglas, through Onchan to Laxey Village, passing the famous "Lady Isabella," the world's largest water wheel (217 feet in circumference) built 100 years ago for pumping water from what was at that time the world's richest lead mine.

"The village, cradled in the shadow of Snaefell Mountain, gives one the impression of harmony and placid contentment, where could be found a multitude of intriguing facets of past history and customs," reads a colourful travel brochure. But we were only passing through, without the time for visiting the Phynnod-derecs' Hole that may still be seen at Lynn Foss Waterfall, nor to listen to the Laxey yarns of the Little Fellows, the Bugganes and the Doinney-Oie.

Motoring further along the coast road to the north, Tom stopped the car at a point high upon the cliff top.

"There's a smart little vessel," he said, reaching under the seat of the car for his binoculars to gain a better view.

"And can you see the Cumbrian mountains beyond her, Denys?" he continued. It was certainly a wonderfully clear day, and far across the blue water I could see them, and even distinguish the thin white line formed by the vapour rising from the atomic power station in Cumberland several miles away.

"From the top of Snaefell to-day you'd see England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales," he said, never missing the opportunity to glorify the advantages of visiting his native land.

"Well, never mind the geography this afternoon, Tom, let's keep moving. It's Ballawhane I'm anxious to see," I told him, as a pleasant sense of excitement mounted within me, for very soon I would see the place I had been trying to visualise for so long.

I fervently hoped the village had not been overtaken by too much modernisation. How wonderful it would be if I were able to photograph the actual cottage to which the islanders of yore had walked so many weary miles in quest of cure and consolation.

Would the famous herb garden still be there? Or would I find someone had erected a concrete garage on the site?

I would have to be patient for a few more miles, and then my queries would be answered. But in the meantime I even wound my camera over again just to be absolutely sure that there would not be a double exposure when I started to take the shots, which would be an important part of my present visit to the island.

Sixteen miles from Douglas the road swept down into Ramsey, second largest town on the island, and generally known as the "capital of the north." My entire visit to the island could have very easily been taken up with a survey of this town's historic background, evidence of which dates back to 3000 B.C.

Summit Conference

As we drove along the side of the harbour, an interesting point of topical interest passed through my mind. It was here in Ramsey that a Summit Conference was held in the year 1154 between Olaf, son of King Godred, and Rognvald, in the excitement of

which Rognvald ended the days of Olaf with a swing of his battle-axe.

Leaving the town behind, we followed the sign-posted road towards Andreas. This took us into the Northern Plain, the part of the island hardly seen by the average tourist. We had encountered no other traffic since leaving Ramsey, and the sight of houses became less and less frequent, until finally we entered Andreas Village itself.

It was here, I had read in the museum, that at one time lived a blacksmith who bore the reputation for curing cancer by the application of a secret form of herbal poultice. After a course of treatment in this manner he was able to draw the growth out completely by its roots.

Sufferers were alleged to have come from all over the island, from Liverpool, and from still further afield. He would tell nobody the prescription for his poultice, not even his own son, so unfortunately the secret was lost at his death about sixty years ago. The writer did however go on to say that this story had only been picked up in the course of conversation, and that he had not verified its authenticity. Consequently, I myself had decided not to repeat this tale, unless I found some reliable evidence to support it, lest my words should raise false hopes in the mind of anyone suffering from this terrible affliction, one of the scourges of modern times, from which no nation is immune. Since then, however, I have read an article by the Vice-President and Chairman* of the Council Imperial Cancer Research Fund, which is headed "Tiny flower brings hope of cancer cure," stating that

* Sir Cecil Wakeley Bt., K.B.E., C.B., Ll.D., M.Ch., D.Sc., F.R.C.S., F.A.C.S. ("Reveille" June 9th, 1960)

after extensive research and the use of an electron microscope, there is now a good possibility of a cancer curing drug being obtained from a common little purple-blue flower known as the "periwinkle" . . . I certainly hope the Council is successful in its efforts.

It seems that this frail-looking plant, that had held its own place for so long amongst herbal remedies, was once more coming to the fore. After reading this article, I referred to my mildewed and musty-smelling copy of "English Physician and Complete Herbal" by Culpeper (1616-1654).

The Leaves of Love

"The periwinkle," he writes, "is a great binder, staying the bleeding of both mouth and nose." Then he refers to the prescriptions of Dioscorides, Galen and Aegineta, which takes its recorded use in medicine right back to the days of Jesus Christ. Culpeper amalgamated herbalism with astrology, and claimed that this tiny weed existed under the influence of Venus. He writes: "The leaves, eaten by man and wife together, cause love between them." What a happy thought—and why not leaves from a slot machine!

Leaving the peaceful village behind, and still driving northwards along a narrow secondary road, we had now journeyed about six miles over the only really level portion of the island. Looking back behind my shoulder, I could see across the rich green fields to where the mountain range rose steeply upwards, silhouetted against the sky as if one were viewing the island from the sea.

This winding country lane was taking me straight to my much-envisaged destination.

"There's not much to see at Ballawhane you know, Denys," said Tom, who up to this time had not even admitted knowing exactly where it was. Suddenly, he swung sharply to the left, forsaking the highway for a cart track. This move seemed to be in accordance with my ordnance survey map, on which I could see a few dots representing buildings, maybe a line of cottages and a public house.

The cart track ended abruptly in the middle of a farmyard. I was just thinking that we'd turned left too soon when my Manx companion said:

"Here you are, Denys! This is your Ballawhane."

There was quite a large well-built farmhouse, but the rest of the buildings marked on the map consisted of a stone-built shippon, barn and pigsties.

I knew, of course, that the word "balla" meant farm, but up and down the island in the course of time it has developed into the names of villages. However, my task looked like being so much easier, with only one house and one herb garden to investigate. But a shadow of doubt had already flickered across my mind, for how could the Fairy Doctor and his predecessors go jogging round the island on their Manx ponies, looking after the sick, when there was a large farm to attend to?

The principal farm buildings were all solidly built of limestone, and I know from the earlier maps that they had been standing for centuries, which gave an immediate impression of prosperity. So why should the old doctor of historian Train's day be dressed in shabby, old fashioned clothes, particularly as this farm

was obviously situated in what must be the island's finest agricultural land?

"Good afternoon," said a cheerful-looking middle-aged lady, who had come out of the house and walked towards the car.

"Good afternoon," responded Tom, to whom I intended leaving the task of opening the conversation, his Manx accent having a distinct advantage on such occasions. "My colleague and I are searching for information about the Teares who used to live here," he continued.

"I'm afraid you must be mistaken," came the disturbing reply, "my grandfather bought this farm nearly ninety years ago, and it's belonged to the family ever since. I was born here, and it's my son who farms it now."

"This IS Ballawhane, isn't it?" I ventured, beginning to doubt my chauffeur's knowledge of this remote district.

"Oh yes," came the definite reply, making the whole situation seem a bit ridiculous.

"Is it perhaps Ballateare you're wanting?" the good lady continued, trying to be helpful by referring to a farm in the adjoining parish. This would certainly appear to be the most obvious place to start a general investigation into the Teare family, but I was concerning myself solely with the healing tradition, and all the information gained so far had shown its association not with Ballateare but with Ballawhane.

"The Fairy Doctor"

I explained to the lady, while Tom looked towards us with a where-do-we-go-from-here expression, and

asked in desperation, "Have you never heard of the Fairy Doctor?" "Why, of course I have" came the reply I'd wanted so much to hear. "He used to live in a little cottage by a pond in the fields over that way," she said, pointing back along the track by which we had arrived, and indicating that the pond was somewhere in the fields on the far side of the Andreas road.

"There's a narrow sunken lane leading to the pond," she said, "we used to drive the cattle along there for water, but since the pipe line was laid this way it hasn't been necessary . . . . the lane won't have been used now for about twenty-five years!"

"That's the gentleman we're interested in," I said thankfully, "do you remember any of your grandfather's stories about him?"

"Oh dear, Grandad's been dead for many years now," she told me, "you mean stories of the herbs and such?"

I nodded my head and she carried on, "When I was a little girl I used to see old Callow Ballathona collecting herbs for his cows. He used to come to our orchard to fill a bucket with them, and they say he lost neither cow nor calf."

This character turned out to be from the neighbouring Ballathona farm, with no association with the witch-doctor, but the herbal aspect seemed interesting.

"Would it be convenient to have a quick look in your orchard right now please?" I asked, wondering what might still be growing there that would have merited the journey from another farm.

"Why, certainly," she replied, leading the way round the back of the pigsties, "it's not really an orchard any more, for the septic tank has been con-

structed there." She pointed beyond a manure heap to a wilderness of nettles and thorn.

Without pursuing the matter any further, I felt certain that Mr Callow must have been collecting, amongst other things, a supply of comfrey, particularly the variety that bears the blue flowers. This is not only an excellent form of foodstuff for cattle, but it is also claimed to be an absolute prevention of foot-and-mouth disease. In the British Isles, when an outbreak of this highly contagious trouble occurs, police notices immediately appear throughout the area concerned, and all movement of livestock is stopped within ten miles of the infected farm. Gallons upon gallons of disinfectant are brought into use, and each moving object, from the birds in the air to the cycle tyres in the lane, is eyed with suspicion by every herdsman, dreading the thought of his own stock becoming infected, subsequently slaughtered, and a lifetime's breeding be committed to the lime-filled graves.

This disease is classed as "notifiable" and as such it is required that any farmer who has reason to suspect that his cattle might be portraying the dreaded symptoms, is bound by law to report the matter to the authorities. Even if there is only one infected beast within a herd of one hundred . . . the other ninety-nine must be immediately slaughtered.

One easily gains the impression from this procedure that foot-and-mouth disease must be a very terrible ailment indeed, but this is not necessarily so Although it is certainly contagious, there are countries where the treatment is much less drastic. When the cattle are taken ill, they receive attention (comfrey is said to cure as well as prevent), and make a recovery.

When Tom and I thought we had taken up

enough of the good lady's time, we thanked her for her kind assistance, I stroked farewell to the tail-less Ballawhane cat that had been brushing against my legs with such affection, and we returned to the car.

The Wine Cure

"There's just one other thing," called our friend as the car swung round within the farmyard. Tom pulled up, and the lady continued, "I remember my baby brother once being critically ill after eating some carrots."

This sounded as though the little fellow had picked up some roots of the highly poisonous hemlock —if so, no wonder he was ill!

This sort of eventuality was foreseen by Culpeper, whose advice, written in that old-fashioned style, where the f's lose half of their ticks and become s's! is as follows:

> "Should any person, unfortunately, through mistake, eat the herbage of this plant instead of parsley, or the root instead of parsnip (both bearing a great resemblance of each other) it will certainly cause a phrenzy or stupefaction of the senses; I will recommend to the patient the strongest and best wine they can procure, and to drink it immediately before the ill effects of the herb strike to the heart."

He then goes on to refer to the prodigious works of Pliny, who wrote 37 volumes of "Natural History" as far back as the year 77 A.D. Seven of these volumes are devoted to medical botany, and he affirms that for

poisoning by hemlock, the sovereign remedy would be a good draught of strong vinegar.

My good-hearted companion who had so kindly driven me out to Ballawhane, was due back in Douglas for seven o'clock that evening, so reluctantly we began the journey back towards Ramsey. The overgrown lane, and the cottage by the pond, which presented such wonderful opportunities for future exploration, would have to hold its secrets for another day.

Passing through the village of Andreas, I could not help thinking once more about the tales of the blacksmith, and wondering if his alleged cancer cure had any association with the hemlock, for in Carmina Gadelica one can read of the removal of cancerous growths by means of a herb named Curran Cruaidh (hemlock), literally "hard carrot."

> "The old Highlanders used a plaster of hemlock for the extraction of cancer. The plaster was applied to the part affected. It is said to have been effective in the earlier stages of the disease, extracting the cancer with its innumerable roots and rootlets, and leaving a hollow where it had been. The process of extraction is said to have been extremely painful, the sound of the tearing out of the roots of the cancer being like the snapping of a linen thread."

CHAPTER FIVE

Success

The information gained at Ballawhane Farm had been rather vague concerning the actual residence of the old Teares, so I decided to spend a further morning at the Douglas Museum.

Again I consulted Mr. Serjeant, and was overjoyed to see him produce from the archives a document which I looked upon as a veritable "map to Treasure Island." It took the form of a delightfully-written article by the Rev. E. C. Paton published in the Ramsey Church Magazine of June, 1899, which I take the liberty of reproducing here in its entirety: —

> "From Andreas Village to the North-West seaboard there are two roads, some half-a-mile apart; that on the right, striking into the coast road at the Largoch Lough; the other lying past Leodest and meeting the coast road at Ballawhane.
>
> "The Largoch is delightful, as even those who live thereabouts will admit, with the usual reservation 'on a Summer's day'. But the Ballawhane district has something that even outrivals the Largoch, in Gat-y-Whing Lough. If picnics ever come to be in fashion again, this spot is herewith recommended as an objective point for those who have the courage to believe that the beauties of the Island are not exclusively located in its mountain glens.
>
> "Ballawhane lies South and West of the left-hand road abovementioned. It has fine timber round the homestead and the house is as much

mansion as farmhouse. Opposite Ballawhane, north of the road, is a lane between high sod hedges, striking into the fields. Follow this lane, it twists beautifully; and sinks somewhat into a depression, where it debauches on the grassy margin of a lough, some two acres in extent, shut in by the high sod hedges of the surrounding fields. On the North-West side, seaward, the fields rise to the grassy dunes along the coast; and northward in receding perspective are the white houses along the coast road towards the Largoch and Kirk Bride.

"This is Gat-y-Whing Lough. Around two thirds of its circle is a border of level sward cut by a sinuous red footpath, and the ruts of cart wheels to Gat-y-Whing Farm in a clump of trees over looking the hollow from the west side.

"The water in the Lough is brown but the greater part of it is covered by a glistening green growth of bogbane, which has driven all other marsh and meadow vegetation from the lough itself to a precarious existence around its margin. The remaining third part of the circuit is occupied by a thicket of willows, thorns and apple trees, overtopped by a few ash trees and sycamores; and through the foliage a glimpse is caught of a roof of bleached thatch and a line of three chimneys. deep.

"The entrance to this secluded place is from the lane, just where it opens on the margin of the lough, the gate of the entrance fastened up. Within the gate is a narrow lane with grass knee high.

'This is where the King of the Fairies lived,'
'Oh! And who was he?'
'Aw well, ... Mister Teare's,'
'The Fairy Doctor?'
'Aye, this is the place.'

"Flowers struggle with rank and seeded grasses and red sorrel, wild roses, pink and yellow, lavender and rosemary; bay and elder; raspberry and currant; weeds and flowers; all gone back to the wilderness of weeds grown rank in confusion, touched by shafts of sunshine under the shadows of apple and thorn; the apple blossom and may bloom in sunlight and shadow, under the ash trees and sycamores.

"There are three enclosures; the front area before the house door, which is turned away from the lough; and between the house and the lough, two gardens, parted by a high hedge of bushes running from the corner of the house to the lough, and fenced off from the lough by high impenetrable hedges. The doors and windows were shut in blank silence; the whitewash is turned brown; the thatched roof, sheltered from all winds, has mouldered with rain and dried to powder in the sun; the very traces of the smoke are bleached from the chimneys; there is a note of loveliness in the shade and seclusion.

"The laboratory where Dr. Teare prepared his herbs of healing charm may still be seen . . . a broken little porch-like shed, built against the walls of the house in the back garden. There is a note of mystery in the seclusion and decay of the place, so that on this spot one can easily imagine

the feelings of awe and incredulity of the messengers arriving, in the simple days gone by, from distant Garff or Rushen to consult Dr. Teare.

"A field separates the old decayed place from Gat-y-Whing Farm which overlooks it from the seaward side, and here, in the genial face of Mr. Kelly, one feels again how lightly the past sits on the present.

"Dr. Teare was a remarkable man, a man of knowledge and skill, living the simple lonely conservative Manx life, a benefactor of the people of his day and generation. His manner seems to have been laconic and professional. Like all other wise men, he seems to have guarded his knowledge with a reserve that to the people became a cloak of mystery."

Quickly copying these tantalising words, with their promise of actually setting foot in my namesake's laboratory, I found myself unable to contain my enthusiasm until Tom's return from business that evening, so immediately left the museum and hired a self-drive car for the remainder of the day. Soon I was speeding along in glorious sunshine towards Ballawhane.

I eventually located the overgrown lane, although its entrance was hardly distinguishable from the high thorn hedge at the side of the road. Finding the weakest point I pushed my way through and gingerly stepped down an uneven slope to the marshy-looking vegetation below, for the lane was actually at a lower level than the fields bordering it, possibly having originated from the dried-up bed of a small stream.

I Discover The Lough

Following the Rev. E. C. Paton's instructions, I moved along carefully through waist-high grass and weeds, past an abundance of fuchsia, honeysuckle and roses growing wild, until the ground became spongy underfoot and my path was blocked by an awkwardly-placed barrier of thorn; beyond it, however, I could see the level area of "glistening green growth of bogbane."

This was the Lough and the end of the lane, so somewhere in the undergrowth on my left-hand side, the remains of a gate might be found. I searched around hopefully, but could see neither the "roof of bleached thatch" nor the "line of three chimneys" that had thrilled the village parson at the end of the last century.

The sycamores, sheltered in this hollow from the coastal breeze, looked down in stately silence as I peered around the border of the lough, becoming increasingly aware of the "atmosphere of awe and incredulity"! particularly on sighting an ominous-looking mound of ivy, protected by the most obstinate brambles and most vicious nettles imaginable.

Inch by inch I edged my painful way through this jungle until at last my outstretched fingers touched the ivy. Shuffling my feet a little further forward I was able to eventually hold apart the dangling growth and see the uneven mud plaster covering of an old stone wall . . . "This is where the King of the Fairies lived."

The easiest way to reach the entrance, or should I say the way presenting the smallest number of

obstacles, was to travel round the derelict building on hands and knees keeping close to the wall, below the ivy which hung down in such density that it even curtailed the growth of nettles at its base.

My progress was hampered by the many stones which had toppled to the ground, but after wriggling round two right-angled corners I finally reached what had originally been the front doorway. Both door and frame had disappeared, only the gap in the stonework remaining, and the thatched roof had long since collapsed, and the wild plant life was just as dense inside the building as in the surrounding garden.

Kneeling there in silent meditation, peering into the cavern of vegetation that had once been the interior of the doctor's home, I thought of all the messengers who had arrived at that very doorway requesting the old man's services to cure a sick cow, cast a spell for good luck over some new fishing nets, or to bless the seed before a crop was sown.

The eerie silence was broken only by my own breathing, calling to mind more tragic circumstances. How many people, I wondered, had reached that doorway breathlessly exhausted, or on the verge of collapse after covering many desperate miles on horseback or even on foot, to gasp out some desperately urgent plea for help?

Perhaps they had begged him to save the life of a badly-scalded baby, to set a child's broken leg, staunch an injured farmer's bleeding, or, most tragic and pitiful of all (for old Teare was expected to perform miracles) to fight to save two lives at once as a young mother writhed in the agonies of complicated childbirth.

This Was His Home

From this very spot the shabbily-dressed old man would set forth astride his shaggy Manx pony, carrying with him only an assortment of his home-made herbal remedies and a few primitive surgical instruments, but fortified not only by a life-time's experience of folk-medicine but also by the inherited knowledge of generations of "doctors" before him.

My knees became uncomfortable, so I decided to stand upright among the brambles, but I must have allowed my imagination to run too freely, for I was startled when something actually moved inside the ruin . . . my presence had disturbed a little bird which had made its nest within the Fairy Doctor's homestead.

Trampling down the nettles within the derelict walls, I was able to ascertain the size of this humble dwelling, which consisted of one room only, barely twelve feet square. In days gone by a ladder attached to the wall would have led up to the space beneath the roof, for in this type of old Manx cottage a bedroom such as we know to-day did not exist; up the ladder Old Charles would go to sleep upon his straw-filled palliasse.

Unlike the present day successors, he could rest in absolute peace. No telephone would shatter his dreams, and even if messengers arrived during the night they would wait outside until the dawn, for it was acknowledged throughout the island that Teare of Ballawhane would perform no miracles of healing between the hours of nightfall and cock-crow.

This policy may seem rather hard and inhuman

in a person whose entire life was devoted to the relief of pain and suffering, but it is quite understandable when one remembers that Old Charles, like his forefathers before him, dissociated himself most rigorously from any form of black witchcraft, or those sorcerers who needed the cover of darkness to carry out their evil practices and ritual.

Many winter storms had beaten into the tiny room since the roof had fallen in, but the mud plaster still adhered to the tumbledown walls; and in one corner a small recess had been built which had been comparatively sheltered; it was absolutely empty, but the interior still bore thick flakes of whitewash accumulated through many annual applications. I was relieved to notice this, for the disturbing thought had flickered through my mind that perhaps the Palace of the King of Fairies had in reality been a dirty little hovel, but the evidence of that alcove showed my fears to have been unfounded.

The Rev. E. C. Paton had mentioned a laboratory built onto the side of the house, so I pushed my way out through the brambles once more to explore still further along the wall. True enough, I found a separate little section of the building, much smaller than the living-room, but unfortunately in some places the walls had fallen almost to the ground. I was quite unable to find any trace of the third chimney despite its apparent existence in the clergyman's day.

Old Charles of Ballawhane not only diagnosed a patient's illness and prescribed treatment; he also cultivated in his garden and collected from the fields and woodlands the medicinal plants required. Into this very building he would bring his raw materials and toil away as a dispensing chemist, painstakingly

chopping a few leaves of one plant, a few of another, and sometimes boiling them together for a precise length of time to produce the exact blend required for the treatment of a particular case. At no time was there the slightest suggestion of his having used the ridiculously repulsive concoctions of the fairy-tale witches' cauldrons, nor of his flying round the countryside astride a broomstick. Nevertheless, he himself claimed that even during his latter years he travelled more miles per annum than any other man upon the island.

The medicines he used were mostly the sort of herbal curing mixtures that countryfolk once passed down their families for centuries, but his knowledge was far more extensive than that of the average countryman; he had the advantage of four generations of "doctors" before him who had devoted their lives exclusively to the use of folk-medicine.

He was a master of the common-sense, back-to-nature methods for the maintenance of a healthy body; the art which has become so sadly neglected in the hectic life we all lead to-day.

CHAPTER SIX

Meditation

Turning away from the delightful beauty spot in the hollow beside Gat-y-Whing Lough, I retraced my steps along the sunken lane, conscious of a feeling of reluctance to leave the place as I pondered over the circumstances which had brought about my visit to Ballawhane.

Long before I was aware of the healing reputation of the Teares of the Isle of Man I had possessed an interest in herbalism, and a great respect for the old fashioned methods once resorted to in time of sickness.

In childhood days, when asked "What would you like to be when you grow up?" by some adult anticipating a response concerning railway engines or aeroplanes, my unexpected reply would be "I'd like to be a veterinary surgeon."

I relished the idea of making kindness to sick animals my full-time occupation, blissfully unaware, as I was at that time, of the years of training and intensive study entailed in gaining such a qualification. This ambition was not achieved, but nevertheless I do gain satisfaction to-day in tending the livestock on my own smallholding.

Pushing through the bushes, and stepping out once more on to the country highway, I walked towards my hired car, but found myself thinking of how contentedly I could have lived at that little cottage in years gone by, and what a satisfying life it would have been to ride around the island from village to village on a pony, bringing relief to the suffering.

The Manx folk are basically a fishing and seafaring race, so it is not surprising that they have spread themselves round the world, nor even that there are said to be more people of Manx descent living in Cleveland, U.S.A., than in the Isle of Man itself.

Similarly, the Teare family itself has spread its branches far afield: amongst my own immediate relatives living mostly in England, my father, only brother, and all my direct cousins have become schoolteachers. In Canada too, several members of a more distant branch of the family are given credit for their "great contribution to the teaching profession in Ontario."

I appeared to be the odd man out, or was perhaps some drop of much-diluted blood of the Ballawhane Teares re-asserting itself to compel my lonely pilgrimage to the humble, long-forgotten cottage by Gat-y-Whing Lough ?

I Treasure The Simple Life

This was not the first time I had experienced an urge to live the simple life. I well remember the winter of 1943 when for several weeks, deep in Occupied France, I was the guest of a kind old couple who risked their lives to give me food and shelter when I had arrived in their district overnight by parachute.

Their home was a little wooden shack on the bank of a canal. Food was scarce, so the old lady used to go off to the woods each day carrying a basket, and during her absence I would laboriously turn the handle of a small coffee grinder filled with grains of wheat gleaned

from the fields after the previous summer's harvest, thus producing after two or three hours' grinding enough flour to make a small loaf or the pastry for a fruit tart. I shall never forget my consternation when my fostermother returned one day with her basket full of toadstools, but my fear of being poisoned was quite unfounded; the white-haired old character had lived so close to nature for so many years that she knew exactly which varieties of toadstool could be consumed with safety.

I learned a good deal about the peasant way of living from these good people. In spite of the ever-present danger of my identity being discovered, and the thought of the horrors that would follow a subsequent Gestapo raid, I nevertheless felt somehow at ease in the simple little dwelling that had, by force of circumstance, become my temporary home. When I eventually returned to England, after a precarious existence in various villages and forests that lasted more than a year, I had accumulated a wealth of knowledge about the simpler ways of life that I treasure to this day.

For several years after the cessation of hostilities I made my way across France, to stand once more on the banks of that canal. The wooden building is still there, but the two friendly, weatherbeaten faces are now missing.

Ballawhane is barely a mile from the northern coast, so I motored down a cart track and parked amongst the sand dunes. Like most visitors to the island, I had always associated the coastline with high cliffs, jagged rocks protruding from the sea and boarding-houses clustered round the pleasant bays. But here on the seafront of the coast of Ayre, one can

stand on the sandhills amongst the sea holly and coarse grasses and look down upon an unbroken stretch of silver shale, extending for no less than five miles on either side, and the ribbon of undulating sandhills interrupted only by an isolated look-out post from which a coastguard keeps his lonely vigil.

The breakers from the Irish Sea rolled ceaselessly inward to expend their energy on the flat expanse of seashells and pebbles with neither rocks nor cliffs to hinder their unceasing surge.

This exposed and deserted spot is not, however, without a fascinating historical background, for to this beautiful island came the Viking chieftains, to pursue a life of farming and fishing.

Immediately behind me was an ancient earthworks known as the Knock-y-Doonee. This circular mound, some fifty feet in diameter and about eight feet high, was typical of many such tumuli that may be found up and down the island, that have always borne an atmosphere of mystery and superstition. It was not until 1927 that the archeologists P. M. C. Kermode and Dr. Bersu carried out an excavation into the Knock-y-Doonee, and they were surprised to find that for the first time in the Isle of Man they were unearthing a Viking Boat Burial.

From the several hundred iron rivets that were carefully cleaned and plotted on a chart, they were able to ascertain that the vessels must have been thirty feet in length. Painstakingly the crumbling remains were slowly sifted from the soil and identified with such diligence that eventually Philip Kermode, who was never a romancer, was able to put forward a suggested identification of the occupant of the grave.

"Athakan The Smith"

He was probably "Athakan the Smith," whose memory is recorded on a cross-slab in Kirk Michael churchyard. The translated inscription on it, dated not later than 950 A.D., states that Athakan's craft was the most important on the island at that time.

His favourite horse would have been used to perform its final duty of dragging the boat up the sand dunes before being slaughtered as a sacrifice to Odin, the father of the Gods. The unfortunate creature's blood was collected in an iron bowl and placed within the boat, and the carcase covered with stones and soil as it still lay in harness. The presence of horses at these burials is probably an explanation for the one-time universal belief that these strange mounds were the burial places of giants, for one had once been disturbed and found to contain bones larger than a normal human being. (Train's History.)

The Viking himself had been wrapped in his finest cloak and laid within the vessel, together with his hammer, and blacksmith's tongs, his sword, spear, shield and great axe, his fishing tackle with its lead weights and finally his faithful dog, having suffered the same fate as his master's horse, was laid alongside. Earth and boulders were heaped upon the pathetic trio, which then became the mysterious grassy mound that lay beyond the sandhills of that isolated Andreas coast that was to be undisturbed for 1,000 years.

The Norse for smith is SMIDR, but this had a wide interpretation, and was used to mean blacksmith, carpenter or a craftsman in both metal and wood. The

land area adjoining the Knock-y-Doonee has borne the title SMEALE for many centuries, and this is said to be a worn-down form of the Norse word SMIDABOL —"the smith's homestead."

Other Viking Ship Burials have been since uncovered on the island, but this first one is of most outstanding interest, for here there would appear to be a most incredible connection with my story. The surname Teare comes by virtue of the abbreviation from the Manx Gaelic—"MAC Y TEYIR," meaning "son of the craftsman." Could it be that Athakan's descendants had persisted on the same few square miles all these years?

One book I have read gives the origin as Irish—Mac-an-t-saoir, which also means son of a craftsman. Its variations can be followed over a long period, for example:—

Mac-an-Tsair	A.990
MacTyr	1372
M'Teare, M'Terre	1504
MacTere	1511
Teare	1599
Tear	1611
Tere	1688

Some of the variations in the surname over a period of time may be seen from the deeds of nearby farm Ballateare, where ownership was held by the following:—

1515	John McTeare
1643	John Teare
1703	John Tear

In the 16th century almost every surname in the island began with "Mc," but by the 17th century they

had mostly been deleted. The letter "e" at the end seems to have been in and out of fashion from time to time, maybe according to the spelling ability of the parson, for it is only 100 years ago that almost everyone signed his or her name with an "X."

At the time the excavations were being carried out by Mr. Kermode and his colleague, the workers on the farm at Ballateare were suffering the inconvenience of having to walk all round one of these strange mounds time upon time in the course of their normal working day—for one of these Viking souvenirs stood right within the farm-yard.

Superstition, and old family beliefs had protected this tumulus for a thousand years, and it was not until a further twenty years after the opening of the Knock-y-Doonee that the ideas of the past were obliged to give way to 20th century farm efficiency.

In this case it was found that the Viking Chieftain had been buried outstretched in an oak coffin with his head to the west. Beside him lay two spears, a sword, and the remains of his wooden shield, which bore traces of having been painted with a design in red, white and black.

All these weapons were supposed to be for the use of the warrior when he reached the other world, but were likely to be such a temptation to the unscrupulous inhabitants of his old world, that it was deemed necessary to break each item before the ceremonial covering with the soil. Even the shield bears the marks of two heavy blows having been struck at the central metal where the user would normally place his hand.

The removal of this burial ground was carried out

in conjunction with the museum authorities, where many of the finds are now on display.

Although no ship had been used for this particular burial, the size of the mound was much the same, and is believed to have been built up by the stripping of sods from the neighbouring farmland. A stout wooden post had at one time stood out from the centre of the mound, wedged firmly in position with packing stones, at the base of which lay the outstretched corpse of a young person, possibly female, that had been thrown on its back with arms upraised. A hole in the back of the skull suggests the story of a rather brutal and gruesome sacrifice.

This body had been covered, and indeed the whole of the platform round the stake, with a three-inch layer of animal bones. There were horses, cattle, sheep and dogs represented amongst the assortment, symbolising the livestock owned by this warrior-farmer. This story in itself has fascination when one thinks of what went on in that very farmyard a thousand years ago, but this was in the Isle of Man, the Isle of Legend; this is where the tallest of tall stories seem to turn out to be remarkably true . . . The Viking gentleman had in actual fact had only a comparatively recent tenancy of the burial mound!

2,000 Years Before The Vikings

When all the soil had been wheeled away, and the museum representatives had carefully listed and packed their treasured remnants, it was suddenly realised that the ground level of the farmyard, now revealed after many centuries, was in actual fact a

burial ground from an even earlier date. Only five inches below the surface of the yard were human remains that the experts dated to have been laid to rest at a period 2,000 years before the Vikings ever landed. Perhaps some superstition had guarded that particular site, so that the same low ridge, with its distant view of the mountains in one direction and the Irish Sea in another, had remained respected from 1000 B.C. to 1000 A.D., just as the Viking mound had been undisturbed till 1946.

There are so many interesting stories to tell about the island, and so many mysteries to be solved (there are over a dozen of these burial mounds still unopened) that it would be very easy for me to wander completely away from my subject. I must have spent an hour walking up and down these sandhills thinking about nothing but the Vikings, and wondering how many people there had been pulling on ropes, and using rollers to help that poor horse to do its last day's work.

Returning to my hotel in Douglas that evening, I descended to the basement to chat awhile with the proprietor and his wife before retiring. Like so many of their compatriots, they would spend the entire summer season living below the level of the promenade, sleeping in a room adjoining the kitchen, and working long hours preparing meals to send up the lift shaft to their two daughters serving the visitors in the dining-room above. The preparation over, they would snatch a few moments' respite before down would come a load of dirty dishes to be washed before starting all over again on yet another meal to satisfy the hungry holidaymakers.

The kitchen was hot but spotlessly clean, and

reminded me somewhat of being below decks on board ship. The season was not yet in full swing, and my hosts offered me a chair and seemed quite willing to pass the time in conversation.

"I've been to Ballawhane to-day," I said, but realised immediately that the name had no significance for this couple, for although now residents of Douglas, they had come from St. Helens in the heart of industrial Lancashire.

"I found the cottage where old Teare, the witch-doctor used to live," I persevered, showing them the scratches of the brambles on my arms, and longing to tell someone about the exciting events of the afternoon.

"That's funny," said my landlady, "a certain Mr. Teare once cured my bad leg a few years ago."

This was almost too good to be true! "About how many years ago," I asked, eagerly shuffling my chair forward. It was almost incredible that I might have actually "struck oil" by accident here in the basement.

By a process of elimination they eventually agreed that the incident had actually taken place in mid-summer, 1949. The husband went on to explain how at that time they were endeavouring to build up a boarding-house trade in one of the smaller houses off the promenade. The children were still young, and it was necessary for him to bring in a weekly wage by working for a local builder.

However, right at the peak of this particular season, the lady of the house became afflicted by a very painful and badly-swollen leg.

"I had to do all my cooking with it propped up on a chair," she interrupted.

The husband continued his story and said that a doctor was called to the house; his treatment did not

seem to be producing the required result, but on the building site was a man named Teare in whom the husband confided details of his domestic predicament and imminent financial crisis.

"Perhaps I can help," said Teare, "I'll call round this evening and see what the trouble is."

True to his word he visited the boarding-house that evening after tea. With little more than a casual glance at the cause of the lady's discomfort, he said, "An old relative of mine is nearly ninety years old, but she will be able to select some special herbs to make you well; I'll visit her and see you again to-morrow night."

The Lancashire couple were not impressed. They were quite unaware of the strange deeds of healing that had been commonplace on the island since long before their own arrival, and their doubts were changed to feelings of astonishment when their friend arrived on the following evening with in one hand a paper bag containing herbs, and in the other a tiny scrap of paper.

The Cure!

"Take this bag of herbs," he said, "boil them for half-an-hour in a pint of water, strain off the liquid and divide it into two equal parts. One portion you must drink while it is still warm, and the other you must gently massage into your swollen leg. While doing this you must read, slowly, and softly, the words that are written on the paper, taking care that no-one else can hear you."

These strange, rather fantastic instructions were given with such obvious sincerity that the couple

managed to control their urge to laugh aloud and ridicule the whole idea, even when the Manxman continued in sombre tone:—

"As soon as you have spoken the words, the piece of paper must be thrown into the fire, and your leg will get better, but if you ever tell a soul the wording of the spell, your trouble will recur."

My landlady had heard the tales of fairies and such-like from the natives of the island, but she had never encountered such a fantastic situation as on that summer evening in her own home. She took over the story from her husband:—

"At first I thought the whole idea was absolute tripe, but this good-natured chap had gone to so much trouble on my behalf that the least I could do was to give his funny remedy a fair trial, especially as he was bound to ask my husband about it on the following day."

Quite apart from the actual pain she was suffering, the problem of attending to her paying guests was becoming increasingly difficult, and, except for the risk of an upset stomach, no other part of the cure seemed likely to cause any harm.

"I swallowed half the liquid," she said, "it tasted horrid, and I felt proper daft sitting there massaging my leg and muttering the words, but nevertheless I did it and threw the paper into the fire."

"Next day she was running up and down stairs and making beds," said her husband, anxious to confirm the story.

"Yes, that's absolutely true," she continued. "The swelling had gone down overnight and you couldn't have told one leg from the other."

This was a rather incredible story, but I saw no

"Charlie Chalse."

reason to doubt it as I already knew of many similar instances where herbalism and charm curing were alleged to have been used in combination to produce equally amazing results. I was very pleased to receive this first-hand account of a comparatively recent cure, for I realised that the older the stories were, the more prone they became to enthusiastic, though unintentional, exaggeration.

Unfortunately, the "man named Teare" had emigrated to Canada shortly after performing his good deed, and when I thought of the old lady who had chosen the herbs, I realised the truth of the words a Douglas bank manager had spoken to me earlier that week: "It's a pity you didn't come over and start your investigations about ten years ago; it would have been a lot easier then."

Before retiring to my bedroom I thanked my hosts for a fascinating evening, and asked the lady if she would care to give me an idea of the words written on that intriguing piece of paper.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Teare, but I've kept the secret for over ten years already, and under the circumstances I don't want to take the risk of having another bad leg by breaking my promise now."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Meeting a Namesake

The purpose of my visit to the Isle of Man was not to establish a family tree but to investigate the story of the witch-doctors. When I had set foot ashore from the deck of the Mona's Queen I had never in my whole life had the occasion to come in contact with anyone who bore the same surname as myself, beyond of course, my father's immediate relatives dotted round Merseyside. There are, however, quite a few families living on the island to-day with the "son of a crafts-man" surname, and strangely enough, they are nearly all confined to the northern parishes just as they were 500 and maybe 1,000 years ago.

I knew that my own great-grandfather was the son of "Robert, the Ramsey Blacksmith," and I had, in fact, mentioned this while chatting with one of the crew on my recent voyage.

"Why, sure, I remember the blacksmith at Ram-sey," he said, "he used to chalk a notice on the smithy door, saying 'GONE TO DINNER. I'LL BE BACK IN NO-TIME'," he continued with a chuckle, not realising that a time-error of about half-a-century had entered into our conversation.

The first of my namesakes that I wished to contact was Mr Cecil of Ramsey, now in retirement after pro-ducing the "Ramsey Courier" for fifty years, with his late brother. He was a Member of the House of Keys, and undoubtedly an authority on the island in general, so I wondered what he would be able to tell me about Fairy Doctor.

The word retirement with reference to Mr Cecil is rather misleading, for in actual fact he leads an

extremely busy and active life. So much so that I had great difficulty in arranging an opportunity to meet him. Earlier in the week we had spoken on the phone, arranged times and places to meet and talk, but on two occasions these rendezvous had been subjected to last minute cancellations. Consequently, the only time we had managed to come face to face, so far, had been within the museum at Douglas; a meeting of the Manx Museum Trustees had broken up and this busy gentleman had just a few minutes to spare before hurrying off to sit on another committee elsewhere in the town . . . he had four different meetings to attend on that particular day.

Finally, a definite appointment was made, and at exactly the agreed time of three o'clock I knocked on the door of his private residence that overlooked Ramsey Bay.

"I'm afraid Mr Teare's ill in bed," said his wife, showing me into the hall, "but if you wish, you may see him upstairs, just for a few minutes."

I thanked the lady, and having ascertained that I would not be disturbing the invalid, I followed her up the stairway.

In the bedroom I was pleasantly surprised to see that Mr Cecil was sitting up in bed, and seemed quite pleased to receive a visitor who might relieve the monotony of his unaccustomed restriction. Consequently my visit, which at first seemed likely to be restricted to a few minutes only, became extended to no less than three very interesting hours of conversation, during which time his good lady produced a most appetising meal on a tray for each of us.

I told him about my visit to the farm at Ballawhane, and the subsequent discovery of the derelict

cottage by Gat-y-Whing Lough. He was extremely interested, and had not previously been aware of its existence.

"Will you go downstairs and ask my wife to find the copy of Wood's Atlas, please: I think you'll find it useful," he said.

In due course I returned to the bedroom with the book upon which all the Manx estate agents and solicitors rely so much. It is a carefully-compiled survey of the island that was carried out in 1867, giving the ownership and acreage of every farm and every separate field at that time. Between us we found the exact position the Rev. Paton had described in his parish magazine, and was owned by a certain Walter William Teare.

A further item of interest produced that afternoon was a press-cutting of 1840 in which the publishers report that they "have learned with pleasure that in an examination of the Original School of Medicine at Dublin, Mr John Teare, son of Mr Teare of Ballawhane, Andreas, has received a First Prize Diploma for his proficiency in practical midwifery."

With a certain amount of poetic licence my tale could quite easily have been brought to an end at this point, giving the story of four generations of witch-doctors who had once lived in the Isle of Man, and how the next-in-line for this distinction, as unorthodox practitioner, gained acceptance in the medical profession, then skipping 100 years to say the tradition is still in evidence to-day, by mentioning Mr Cecil's two nephews, who are both well-known doctors.

There were still, however, many pieces of the jig-saw to be positioned, and so many more questions still to be answered.

Who, for example, was the "Ballawhane woman of great repute" who gave treatment to a child in the year 1849, the child who later became the nationally-known figure of Dr. Clague, an incident which was to become mentioned in his Manx reminiscences?

Who did the writer A. W. Moore, M.A., refer to, fifty years later, in his book on Manx folk-lore, when discussing witch-doctors, states "the present Ballawhane is a woman, and the writer knows several people who have gone to her within the last two years to get relief from the effects of the Evil Eye?"

Could both these men have been referring to the same person?

This might seem a possibility when one thinks of an earlier generation, for a character known as "Little Daniel" died at 110 years of age in 1787.

But why did Sir Wadsworth Busk, Attorney-General, honour Little Daniel's memory by the erection of a memorial? Why is this memorial in Santon Churchyard, in the south, when he was a native of Andreas?

Another intriguing question concerned a charm healer called Charlie Chalse. Why did books in the museum state that he was a "son of Teare" with a name like that?

Many of the really old island stories, sea shanties, ballads and such-like, must have been lost for ever, for though I managed to pick up such items here and there amongst the island's history books, only a very small amount of the Manx language has ever been printed, or even written.

Concern about this was expressed as long ago as 1663 by Bishop Barrow when describing the inhabitants he wrote . . . "There is nothing either written, or

printed, in their language . . . neither can they who speak it best, write to one another."*

The process of passing down old yarns and folklore became in an even more precarious position by the gradual falling into disuse of the national language. At the annual Tynwald Ceremony, the laws of the island are still proclaimed in the native tongue, though the natives who understand it are now few and far between.

One of the earliest Manx ballads, of two hundred years ago that has survived, and been translated into English is known as "The Lament of Her Two Sons," by Widow Tear of Ballough. This twice-married lady bore a son by each marriage and outlived both husbands and sons.

The latter were known as William Walker and Robert Tear, little is known about Robert, but the other boy, William, is remembered as one of the most learned and distinguished men in the island's history.

At the age of twelve or thirteen he was employed on Balladoole Farm, but somehow or other he had already learnt to read and write, this being in itself a wondrous achievement for those days. A romantic story is recorded about this youngster reading a book while sitting on an empty horse-drawn sledge near the farmhouse, and becoming so engrossed in the contents that he was unaware that the horse had become restless and wandered on to the lawn. This incident was witnessed by a Mr Stevenson (who later became the Speaker in the House of Keys), and he was so impressed with the boy's intelligence that the very next day he arranged for the boy to attend the Academic School: this was in 1692.

* Ecclesiastical Records

Bible Translated in Castle Rushen

It was that same farm hand who became the Rev. William Walker, LL.D., Vicar-General of the island. It was he who was wrongly imprisoned in Castle Rushen with the famous Bishop Wilson in 1722. It is said that during their confinment they both began to translate, for the first time ever, the Holy Bible into the native language.

There was such furious indignation throughout the island at the arrest of the popular bishop, whom the people looked upon as the champion of their political rights and liberties, that they surged towards Castletown in large numbers. This angry mob determined to ransack and destroy the Governor's house, and would probably have succeeded in doing so had not the distinguished prisoner in the nearby castle heard of their intention. He begged his guards for permission to speak to his flock before the situation got completely out of hand. He was allowed to stand at a grated window, and while he spoke to them in English his words were shouted out in Manx by the younger man at his side, the same man who had once let the sledge-horse wander, and who was at that time Parson Walker . . . . .

WILLIAM WALKER AND ROBERT TEAR
(By Widow Tear, 1740.)

Before I e'er a mother was,
Happy I spent my time,
Sinless my heart, painless my head,
And blooming was my face.

My mind free from the weight of care,
Tranquil both night and day,
But now my comfort it has failed,
My heart is broke for aye.

When I had changed my state, God gave
Me blessing of children.
I brought them up that I could say,
Their equals were but few.

In fear of God with good learning,
So beautiful and pure:
And I thought that they would help me,
When I'd be weak and old.

To tell the straits that I was in
Rearing my children thus;
I cannot write, 'tis very hard
To tell such things in words.

Trouble and want took hold of me,
They came nigh to my heart:
But the real pain came not my way,
Until they had left me.

At penmanship my Robin was
In skill the head-master:
And he was growing every day,
Higher in folks esteem.

A sample of his skilful hand,
He left in black and white,
On Keeil-Chroo's whited wall, that it
Should keep his mem'ry still.

1* The name of a Chapel.

Will, parson of Kirk Mary was,
Christ's careful shepherd he;
The Bishop's hand, the people's eye,
The Church's judge also.

The poor's blessing, the widow's help,
Guard of the fatherless:
Supporter of the weak, he'd not
Bear from tyrants a wrong.

And though his charge was very great,
His wisdom was equal;
His conducts and merits were known
At England's Royal Court.

Whence his Worship got a new name,
Strange amongst us before;
Such as no living Manxman had,
2*And scarce one after him.

Brilliantly shone forth his light
Throughout the whole Island:
His example spread everywhere,
His good advice also.

God's glory and his small flock's good,
Were constantly his care,
Obedient to his Head Shepherd,
Thereby to gain reward.

The Manxman had great reason to
Lament such a kind friend:
How few of them have such courage,
To keep evil deeds down.

2* The letters . . . Ll.D.

Parson Walker will be thought of,
As long as Mann exists;
Fathers during many an age
Will tell their sons of him.

How he went up to the King's Court,
'Gainst those who broke the law;
He took all their courage from them,
And they were quite subdued.

Who will dry up the tears that flow
From the eyes of the flock,
Mourning their shepherd well-beloved,
Who's now no more with them.

But I, his mother, lost him when
I was in the greatest need,
He was brought too soon over the stile
To the mournful churchyard.

Once I was happy in my sons,
A joyful mother they
Made me; above want they kept
My head in their support.

Now I am covered with deep night,
Without light east or west;
My candle's out, there's no resource,
To cheer mother or sire.

In black darkness my mind is shut,
Without expecting light;
In a depth where there is no ground,
Amidst the tempest too.

Journey To The Wise Man

The old folk-doctors were looked upon with such faith and respect that some of them acquired a reputation which was confined not only to healing but also extended to the ability to foretell the future. An example of this may be found in the records of the Church Courts of 1741. A witness told how he met a sad and anxious man from Kirk Braddan, making his way on foot over the mountains, on a twenty-mile journey to Ballawhane to ask the wise man whether his wife, whom he had left at home ill, was going to recover or not.

There is also evidence of healing at long range having been carried out in years gone by in much the same way as the curing of the case of quinsy suffered in recent years by Tom's wife. But when Train wrote his History of the Isle of Man, he even mentioned that the diagnosis of cattle ailments could be carried out from a distance.

One particular instance mentioned by Train concerns a certain Mr Corlett, who farmed at Ballamona in the parish of Kirk Braddan. This gentleman's cattle were struck with a strange illness which gave the impression that they had become bewitched, the treatment of which is told by Train as follows: —

> "Nor were the cattle cured, 'till Mr Corlett obtained a servant-girl from the north of the island (where antidotes to witchcraft are thoroughly understood), who was so well skilled in the doctrine of sympathy that she could take a mote out of a person's eye though at a distance of

many miles from the afflicted person, and who, by the action of the knife on the cutting of the herbs to be applied to the cure of any animal, could tell the extent of the disease by which the animal was afflicted."

So far, most of my information had been obtained from books, but I was now looking forward to visiting a nurseryman who lived not far from the museum in Douglas. According to information received in Ramsey, this gentleman was believed to be in possession of documents showing his direct descent from the Ballawhane family.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Nurseryman

Walking steeply uphill away from the Douglas promenade, I reached the upper portion of the town and not very far from the grandstands from which many thousands of racing enthusiasts watched the massed start of the famous Tourist Trophy Motor Cycle Races; on a massive scoreboard they could watch the progress of the riders as each individual is timed as he hurtles past the famous landmarks round the course.

Here I found the Laureston Nurseries, with its lines of greenhouses and a detached house supporting a lean-to flower shop. I paused before opening the shop door in order to admire the attractive floral display at the side, where a large capital "T" had been created in living flowers.

"Would it be convenient to speak to Mr Teare, please?" I asked a young lady standing behind the counter.

"Here he is now," she replied, for just then a rugged middle-aged gentleman, with a twinkle in his eye and a ready smile had entered the shop from another doorway.

Introductions were exchanged, and as I shook hands and felt the hard-worked fingers of a man who derives his livelihood from the soil, I wondered how closely this man's knowledge of the cultivation of plants and flowers might resemble that of the old gentleman of long ago whose garden of herbs was looked upon with such wonder and esteem that fishermen were known to have walked miles in order that

they might gain health and good fortune merely by rolling over and over across the precious plants.

The Story of Ballawhane

"I'm trying to find out all I can about the old folk-doctors of Ballawhane," I said.

"Well, I'll help you if I can," he replied, adding with a chuckle, "but I've never been one for believing all these tales of witchcraft and fairies, you know!"

"That's strange talk to come from a Manxman," I said, "especially a descendant of Ballawhane."

"I'm not much of a one for bothering about ancestors either; things that happened in years gone by are finished with, dead, and it's no use crying over milk spilt even before I was born, is it now?"

"What exactly do you mean by that?" I asked, detecting the possibility of a "skeleton" in the family cupboard.

"From what my father told me, I understand that my grandfather lost Ballawhane through being far too generous and kind-hearted."

"Do you mean the old cottage?" I asked, feeling that somehow I was not quite in the picture.

"Oh no! I don't mean any cottage. "I'm talking of the 190-acre farm, Ballawhane, said to be one of the best in the island; 'twas sold by order of the coroner in 1881 for eight-and-a-half thousand pounds" came the reply, which seemed to shatter the information gained so far, for I thought that this grandfather who had just been mentioned would be the son of the Fairy Doctor.

"Are you sure we're not getting mixed up with the Ballateare Farm which is also on the Northern Plain?" I suggested, remembering that I had been told a short while previously that no Teares ever lived at Ballawhanc Farm.

"No, there's no mistake, in fact, I know that until old granddad ran into trouble Ballawhane had been handed down from at least as far back as the year 1515. You can see the Manorial Rolls if you pay a couple of shillings down in town, and you'll find the farm mentioned in some of the island's earliest records," he replied with confidence.

During my investigation I was continually coming across stories which seemed unbelievable, and in most cases there appeared to be no means whatsoever by which I could actually prove them to be fact or fiction, and by using my own discretion decided that they were not worthy of further consideration. To-day, however, I was interviewing a person whose remarks were in direct contradiction to the impressions I had already gained, who not only mentioned some precise dates, but told me exactly where I could verify these statements.

Later that same day, I walked into the Rolls Office, and with the co-operation of the very obliging staff, I was able to read the actual conveyance of 1881 concerning the sale of Ballawhane Farm.

The sale price was exactly that quoted by the nurseryman, and the acreage was actually slightly less than 190 making the figure even more fantastic for a time when the average man was not even receiving ten shillings per week for working nearly all the hours of daylight.

This document had not been particularly easy to

produce, and I did not wish to strain the patience of the staff by asking for a document dated 1515, but I saw no reason to disbelieve the word of Harry Teare, and felt that the signature of his grandfather Walter William, must have been placed at the foot of the piece of paper in my hands with a heavy heart, for it marked the end of the Teares of Ballawhane after farming that homestead for three-and-a-half centuries.

The issue was now becoming rather confused. All the books in the museum referred to the folk-doctors (five generations of them), as the Teares of Ballawhane, but at no time was the impression given that these same people were amongst the richest people on the island; on the contrary, they seemed to be very humble little gentlemen, dressed in very well-worn and inexpensive clothing, trotting around on the backs of ponies.

Only one writer had mentioned the cottage at the side of Gat-y-Whing Lough, neither the nurseryman nor Mr Cecil at Ramsey had heard of it, and yet I knew the words of the Rev. F. C. Paton in his parish magazine were bound to be correct, for obviously all his parishioners were in a position to verify or contradict them.

When I had studied Wood's Atlas of 1867, I had found the little plot of land on which the cottage stood bore the number "278t," which in the index was said to belong to W. W. Teare.

Obviously I must go back to the nurseries and gain as much as possible of Harry's precious knowledge.

I found him busily occupied in a packing shed, and watched him deftly twisting thin wire round the stems of flowers, and securing them expertly to a circular frame. Round and round his fingers moved

quickly fitting leaves and flowers to gradually build up a wreath of delightfully blended colours.

"I'll be very pleased to help you all I can with your enquiries, but excuse me for carrying on working at the same time, won't you?"

"Certainly," said I, being only too pleased that I could talk to him without actually hindering his work, "firstly, can you tell me why the farm changed hands, and what did the coroner have to do with it?"

"Well you see, grandfather must have had a very trusting disposition, and human nature being what it is, there were apparently quite a few people who eagerly took advantage."

The Manxman paused to stoop and pick another bunch of chrysanthemums from the floor. "Of course, that's of no consequence now: things like that are best forgotten, as indeed they almost are, except that to-day you've called and asked about Ballawhane."

Manx coroners are not officials who conduct inquests, as in England, but officers who enforce summonses, executions, and writs issued by the courts, and at the ancient Tynwald Ceremony they were charged with the discipline of the crowd, and were armed with swords or battle-axes.

It appeared, therefore, that the downfall of the unfortunate Walter William was brought about by the kindness of his own heart, but the sale of the farm realised more than the actual amount to which he himself was indebted, so, although he had lost the family home with its long-standing tradition, he was able to start life afresh in Douglas owing no one money.

By this time I was beginning to wonder whether the folk-doctors were perhaps a separate branch of the

family, occupying a little cottage owned by their rich farming relatives nearby.

"I understand my grandfather to be a son of the old witch-doctor, though I've not had much interest in that sort of thing," said Harry, answering my further questioning, "and I know he had seven children."

"Are any of them still alive?" I asked.

"Yes," came the reply, "I have an uncle and an aunt, both living here in Douglas. I'm sure they'd both be willing to help you, but I think they were each born after the farm was sold."

Quickly I added two more addresses to the list of possible sources of information.

Although Harry could not tell me a great deal more on the subject of my enquiry, there was a phone in one corner of the packing shed which he seemed to pick up without the slightest hesitation each time I asked a further question.

A Charm From Ballawhane

"I have a little book at home full of drawings of interesting and unusual items peculiar to the Isle of Man, one of which shows a mare's skull which, the author says, was a charm of some sort, for many years, in the possession of Mr Teare of Ballawhane."

Picking up the phone, my newly-made acquaintance dialled a number. "Hello Dusty," he said, "I've someone here to speak to you," then passed the receiver over to me.

"There you are," he continued. "That's Dusty Miller the artist; he wrote that book you mentioned, called 'It's a Fact,' and they're all his own drawings."

I had an interesting conversation, then replaced the receiver, looking forward to meeting Dusty in the near future.

"He mentioned that a certain Mr Quayle at the Melrose Hotel is quite an authority on Manx folk-lore, and possesses an excellent collection of old Manx books," I said.

Once again this helpful nurseryman put down his wreath and again picked up the phone. In due course he handed it over to me once more. "That's Ramsey Quayle," he said, "we're both members of the Council."

I arranged to call at the Melrose Hotel one evening later in the week and replaced the receiver thanking Harry very much for his two introductions.

"Have you been to the public library?" came a final question as I prepared to leave.

"Well, I've been to the reference library attached to the museum," I replied, having only just realised the possibility of there being two libraries.

Needless to say, the receiver left its stand once more.

"There you are," said Harry, having introduced me yet again, "that's Mr Ladds, the librarian."

In the space of just a few minutes, with the aid of Harry Teare's telephone, several very useful connections had been made, but I had by now come to the conclusion that much of the confusion between identification of folk-doctors as apart from the farmers was no doubt due to the fact that as there was no actual village beyond Andreas to the coast, but the Ballawhane Farm had been recognised for hundreds of years, anyone who inhabited the tiny cottages dotted within that area were automatically given the identification " . . . . of Ballawhane." Such title would be

so much easier than endeavouring to quote a person as being " . . . . of a tiny cottage a couple of miles north of Andreas." I think that it would be from those humble little dwellings made of mud and stone with thatched roofs, that the healing tradition was established. Buildings, originally constructed by the potential occupier himself, that once they became disused and neglected would not withstand the winter gales, and in space of time became reduced to a heap of stones upon the ground. The ruined cottage at the side of Gat-y-Whing Lough once visited by the Rev. Paton, was no doubt the last of a line of similar dwellings, occupied by the witch-doctors Teare on various sites in the proximity of the Ballawhane farm owned by their wealthy cousins.

CHAPTER NINE

The Bone-Setter

Whilst I conversed with Harry the nurseryman, he had pointed over the hedge to an adjacent house and said "That's where Sir Herbert Barker lived, he must have been one of the greatest healers of all time."

"Do you mean the world-famous bone-setter?" I asked, being unaware up to that time of the great man's association in any way with the Isle of Man.

"That's right," said Harry, "he really came to the island to retire, but I remember him being a very active old gentleman indeed."

"Well surely that must have been quite a few years ago, Harry, for I understood he was knighted by King George V even before I was born, and it had certainly taken very many years of bone-setting before he received such high acclaim."

"Oh no, it's only a few years ago that he died," after a moment of meditation he continued. "It would be in 1950, but I remember him very well indeed, I used to see him regularly going for his morning run before breakfast . . . . he was about eighty years old then!"

"Was he still accepting patients while living here on the island?" I asked.

"He couldn't get away from patients," came the reply, "it is said that there were over a thousand requests lying on his desk from all parts of the world. He did manage to see a few patients each day, but during World War II he temporarily came out of retirement, and in Noble's Hospital here in Douglas,

he carried out no less than 600 manipulative operations free of charge."

No book concerning unorthodox healing could be really complete without at least a mention of this highly esteemed gentleman, who in the course of his lifetime must have brought relief to thousands upon thousands of sufferers, but who is generally alleged to have never received recognition by the medical profession. This statement would then appear to be not quite correct, for here on the island I found on further enquiry that in the Noble's Hospital he is known to have carried out as many as 26 operations in one day. This is no minor achievement for a man of his years, but the most important factor was that his wonderful ability was allowed to be exercised at last without any objection being raised by the General Medical Council, with whom he had been at cross-purposes for about half a century.

Bone-setters did at one time hold a distinctive place among the practitioners of healing, and just as the striped barber's pole is associated with the letting of blood, leading up to the surgery of to-day, so must modern orthopaedics admit its origin in the bone-setters.

Barker received his basic training in the art through his cousin, one of the most experienced practitioners of his time, John Atkinson, but was to concentrate more upon joints, muscles, cartilages and ligaments than actual broken bones, never wasting an opportunity of extending his knowledge on these subjects. This thirst for perfection is revealed in his own words: —

> "The leisure at my disposal I filled by getting hold of and reading old and abstruse works on

surgery—especially those dealing with disease of the joints. I was consumed with the desire to know what other methods had been known and practised by the men who had been the teachers of the present generation of orthodox surgeons. I wanted to saturate my mind with knowledge upon the subject, to mould my mental make-up for my work, to leave no stone unturned to secure the utmost proficiency in my technique."*

Barker was born in Lancashire where his father was a solicitor, but while still in his early teens the tragic death of both parents in quick succession disrupted his family life; he was sent away to school at Kirby Lonsdale, in Westmorland until the age of 18, when it was decided he should receive private tuition prior to entrance to London University. When his health broke down he was sent to Canada to regain his strength and it was an accident on the outward voyage which may be said to have influenced his entire future.

His First Operation

One of the passengers slipped on deck and dislocated his elbow, and young Barker watched as an interested spectator whilst a man endeavoured unsuccessfully to reset the limb. When the unfortunate passenger was on the point of fainting from pain, the young man pressed forward with an offer to help, and in the following words he describes what was actually

* "Leaves from my life" by Sir Herbert Barker.

to become the first of an estimated 100,000 manipulative operations in the course of his lifetime:—

> "I thrilled as I took hold of the injured member, whilst something seemed to guide my hand and regulate the strength and range of my movements as—almost tenderly—I ran my tingling fingers over a prominence which I thought ought not to be there. Then I, trusting to an instinctive guidance and using my common sense, executed what I deemed was the necessary hold and leverage, and, in a trice, something 'gave' and the arm resumed its normal shape."

From that moment he knew the purpose to which he could best devote his life. Within twelve months he returned from Canada fit and strong, eager to start an apprenticeship under his cousin, Atkinson the Bone-setter, in the latter's consulting rooms in London's select Park Lane.

So often the ancestry of persons devoted to healing has revealed the existence of some inherited trait or instinct passing from generation to generation. This probably accounts for the desire of the pale-faced teenager, somewhere in the Atlantic, to force his way through the bystanders and request permission to reset a joint (using what he calls "an instinctive guidance") when already one person had failed so painfully.

This may also explain why, after the incredibly short period of one year under his cousin's tuition, Herbert Barker, now a young man of twenty, should have become so very proficient that he was able to leave Park Lane, travel north to Manchester, there to take rooms and set up practice entirely on his own.

There were very few visitors to his humble surgery

at first, but gradually a slight trickle of casualties from amateur rugby and soccer matches, having failed to respond to the "magic sponge," made their appearance at his door. His ability became known to coaches and trainers of various clubs, and soon the professional sportsmen were being sent to receive his services.

The restoration to health of a few crippled sporting heroes was the most wonderful publicity for Barker. His name began to spread around the industrial south of Lancashire with its thousands of manual workers, many of whom were already prone to accident by virtue of their hazardous occupations.

Tough and wiry miners from Wigan and St. Helen's, powerful rugged stevedores from the docklands of Liverpool and Salford placed their injured limbs at the mercy of this youngster who had healed their sporting idols, but from whom he would receive most blunt and outspoken criticism if the agonising jerks and wrenches to dislocated joints failed to produce the desired effect.

He Was Often Paid in Kind

His reputation snowballed, and though his fees were often paid in the form of joints of meat, rolls of cloth, and suchlike, he was no longer struggling for existence.

Soon he was answering the demands of his public by making regular monthly visits to Liverpool, Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield, gaining an immense amount of experience in all aspects of his profession.

Thrilled with his own success, and realising the power and fame that lay within his fingers, the young

bone-setter became over-confident. He gave up his extensive practice amongst the mills and factories to launch himself on London society, from luxuriously-furnished consulting rooms off the Haymarket. He failed dismally, and after a serious bout of scarlet fever he was glad to withdraw from the Capital and head once more for the North Country.

This time he went right up to Scotland and chose Glasgow, where, unlike his previous experience, he found his rooms in Sauchiehall Street became inundated with patients right from the start. There he ran a very flourishing practice until, at the age of 37, though now much more mature, he attempted once more to establish himself in London.

This time he was successful, firstly from consulting rooms in New Bond Street, and then, on the retirement of his cousin, taking over the Park Lane practice, from whence he rapidly began to acquire international fame.

He had at last made his mark in London, and gained the confidence of the public in general, but Barker's further ambition was to convince the medical profession that he was no "quack doctor"; his cures were carried out by virtue of his extensive knowledge of the structure of the human body, and the application of a precise pressure and leverage at an exact position using his own powerful but supersensitive hands without the slightest trickery being involved.

Many times he announced that he would always welcome any doctor who wished to watch him at work in his surgery, and quite frequently sent out written invitations requesting them to do so. On one such occasion, Barker wrote to twenty doctors, whose names he had chosen at random from a medical directory, asking them to watch him on a certain day. Only

three or four accepted his hospitality, one of whom was a certain Dr. Frederick William Axham whose experience in medicine both at home and abroad extended over 44 years. He was so impressed with what he saw that he asked permission to study further manipulative operations, and thereupon continued to visit the premises each day for a month.

This lengthy observation was not due to any doubt lying in the doctor's mind, but because, as he watched the excruciating pain suffered by some of the patients in the course of their treatment, he himself was wrestling with the most difficult decision of his medical career.

It was not until Dr. Axham's 45th consecutive visit to study the bone-setter's working day that he made a dramatic announcement.

"I believe it to be my duty to assist you by making your manipulations painless," he said solemnly.

Barker, though longing for the services of an anaesthetist, warned him that the General Medical Council would frown severely upon a member of the profession participating in the healing carried out by an unorthodox outsider.

"I cannot help that," came the firm reply, "the paramount duty of my profession is the relief of suffering not the observance of any regulation that may interfere with that duty."

Start of the Partnership

So began the working combination of anaesthetist with bone-setter that was to last until Axham's retirement 14 years later.

Manipulative surgery without pain opened an even wider field to Barker, but each time a cripple walked often within five to ten minutes, cured of some abnormality which had failed to respond to years of orthodox treatment, his acceptance by the qualified members of the medical world seemed as far off as ever, though these same men would have praised his name for these same deeds if only he had qualified through a medical school.

Dr. Axham was struck off the Medical Register for "infamous conduct" in a professional respect. In a letter published in the "Times," 26th May, 1911, he writes:—

> "My sin is that for the last five years I have acted as anaesthetist to Mr. H. A. Barker of Park Lane, whose fame as a bone-setter is world-wide. His methods sooner or later are bound to be recognised amongst those universally employed by surgeons. His genius and skill are universally acknowledged.
>
> "I am professionally ostracised because, after the most careful investigation of Mr. Barker's methods, I associated myself with him . . . I can make no appeal. The decision of the Council is final, and my professional status is stripped from me for an association which was, and is, desirable in the interests of suffering humanity."

Some years after Barker had received a knighthood, the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, decided to restore Axham's name which they had suspended sine die in 1912, when they deprived him of all his rights and privileges as a licentiate, provided

that he could prove to them that for the past five years he had abstained from the practices for which he was originally suspended, and could give an assurance that he would not resume them.

The unfortunate gentlemen was now 86 years of age and was dying, but the General Medical Council refused to show even the small degree of mercy offered by its Scottish counterpart.

Questions in Parliament

During the First World War, there was so much feeling in the country concerning Barker's status in the medical sphere, that questions were raised in the Houses of Parliament as to whether he could be given official recognition and his services utilised for the treatment of members of the Armed Forces.

One member of Parliament quoted the case of a Corporal Dinkall who had been discharged from the army on pension because of his injuries, but who visited Barker and . . . . "within five minutes changed from being an almost helpless cripple into a strong active man."

Another member, who had himself been treated for an old knee injury, asked: "Was the Under-Secretary for War aware that no less than 3,000 men had already been discharged from the army with deranged knee cartilages?"

"Should not these 3,000 men be sent to Barker, now that the army surgeons had relinquished them as incurable?"

Later that same year, 1917, an Injured Soldiers

(Parliamentary) Committee, on which 58 Members of Parliament served, sent a deputation to see Lord Derby, the Minister for War, to ask if injured soldiers could be given manipulative surgery. The outcome of this meeting was that Lord Derby referred the question to the Crown's Law Officers, who in turn referred to the Medical Act of 1858 whereby . . . . "no one should hold any appointment, as physician, surgeon, or other medical officer in the military or naval service unless he be registered under the Act."

The case was investigated thoroughly by three eminent barristers who reported to the House of Commons: —

> "There is nothing in the Statute to prohibit treatment by an unqualified practitioner, providing it is prescribed or authorised by those holding appointments to do so."

Here was an immense step forward for the supporters of Barker, but these Law Officers added a recommendation "that the General Medical Council should be consulted before any services doctor called in any unregistered practitioner."

The lamentable outcome of these findings was that, in spite of the appalling number of casualties brought about during the continuance of the war, Barker, the man who could have helped so many, was never called in.

When world peace was once more restored, his sympathisers and supporters began clamouring again for Barker to receive some official form of recognition. Someone hit upon the ingenious idea of petitioning the Archbishop of Canterbury to revive the old custom

Burnt at the stake.

of conferring the "Lambeth Medical Degree," which had not been utilised since the passing of the Medical Act. A formidable array of signatories to this petition included distinguished men from almost every walk of life, numbering among them 307 past and present Members of Parliament including the Lord Chancellor of the time, a former Home Secretary, the Attorney-General, the Solicitor General, four ex-Cabinet Ministers, two Lords of the Treasury, thirteen Privy Councillors, eleven King's Counsel, two admirals, four generals, eighteen colonels, nineteen majors and sixty-one baronets and knights.*

Archbishop Says "No"

The Archbishop wisely turned down this request, for though it was presented with such an exceptional weight of support it would have been of little use to Barker to be able to use the title "Doctor" when it had been conferred in more or less the manner in which a bishop receives the same distinction, but with whom no one associates it with the use of medicine. In his rejection, however, the Archbishop expressed the hope that some other means could be found by which public appreciation could be expressed to Barker for his "eminent services to sufferers."

Some of the best-known surgeons in Britain, acting independently of both the General Medical Council and the British Medical Association, took a hand in the matter by approaching the Prime Minister, Mr. David Lloyd George, with the suggestion that Barker's

* "Frontiers of Healing" (G. Murray)

name be submitted for inclusion in some future Honours List.

A knighthood was duly bestowed upon the great healer, whose skill was now renowned throughout the world. Indian princes, millionaires and others paid him generously for the miraculous service which only he could provide. In 1925, already a wealthy man, though only 55 years of age, he ceased to practise. But retirement came very hard to Sir Herbert Barker after such an active 35 years in an occupation of which he was the supreme master. First he went to live in Italy, then to the Channel Isles, but no matter where he went, he was sought after by celebrities in all aspects of life, who begged him, with open purses, to cure their crippled joints that had failed to respond to orthodox treatment.

He finally settled in the Isle of Man where he must have found the inhabitants and their laws of taxation to his liking. His retirement lasted 25 years, and when celebrating his 76th birthday in Douglas he was asked about the constitutional run he took before breakfast . . . . "and believe me," he said, "I don't play about—I go full out for about a quarter of a mile."

In July, 1950, when 81 years of age, he visited his sister in Westmorland, and while over there he slipped, broke his thigh and passed away ten days later.

After such a distinguished career, so valuable to humanity, and yet subjected to such criticism, it seems that fate destined his latter days to be spent on the little Manx island with its quaint manners and customs; where witch-doctors and charm-healers were still remembered with affection, and where the governing officials openly respected the old grey-haired gentle-

man's ability. When the world became plunged into war for the second time within his lifetime, he received the call for his services which was so long overdue . . . this time there was no objection raised by the General Medical Council.

CHAPTER TEN

A Trial For Witchcraft

Following up the telephone introduction to the Public Librarian, arranged by Harry the nurseryman, I visited him in his private office above the library. He had already sorted out several books concerning the Ballawhane tradition, which now lay on the table awaiting my arrival, but most of the information contained therein I had already gained from the reference library of the Manx Museum.

"What are your personal opinions on these subjects concerning witch-doctors, charms and such-like?" I asked.

"Well, I'm not quite sure," he said, "some ideas are rather far-fetched to say the least." Here he paused, then with a smile continued, "This, for example, I always carry in my pocket for immunisation from rheumatism," he said, producing a blackened nutmeg that over the years had been polished by continual contact with coins, keys, handkerchiefs and all the objects for which a gent's pocket becomes the automatic depository.

"Do you really think it helps?" I asked, using the emphasis that was meant to convey the impression that I regarded the possibility with a certain incredulity.

"Well, this very nut was carried by my father for many many years, and right up to the day he died he was never troubled with the slightest trace of rheumatism." He paused and turned over the simple talisman thoughtfully in the palm of his hand. "I realise of course, that this doesn't prove a thing, but as

I certainly hope never to become a sufferer, anyhow, it causes me no inconvenience to keep it in my pocket—just in case."

This is the sort of answer one can expect to receive from all the thousands upon thousands of people who carry around the strangest of objects in their pockets and purses: "see some coal and pick it up, all the day you'll have good luck," won't walk under a ladder and all those tiny little superstitious habits that just don't seem to have any logical explanation whatsoever.

"Do you have any other superstition," I asked.

"Oh no, I'm not a superstitious person at all really, I think perhaps the nutmeg derives its attraction from sentiment as much as superstition," he replied, "my daughters frequently pull me up for my disregard of some of the quaint old Manx customs."

"Such as?"

"Well, quite recently I mentioned the word 'rat' in the house, which is strictly taboo over here. I should have used the expression 'long-tailed fellow' lest I brought about some domestic misfortune."

At this point Mr Ladds was called away, and left me to jot down one or two interesting points from the books he had selected.

Suddenly I came across a small reference which brought an entirely new chapter into my research, for, up to that point, all the Teares had been reverenced by the population for their healing abilities. Now, however, reading about the witches being tried and executed, I found that there was a court case conducted at Ballaugh (about six miles from Ballawhane) in the year 1638 when a certain Jony Tear was accused of "administering strange herbs."

The most exasperating thing about this short mention of Jony was the fact that the writer had omitted to say what was the outcome of the trial. Legislation on the question of witchcraft in the Isle of Man is covered by the 50th Spiritual Law . . . . "all such as are suspected for sorcerie and witchcraft are to be presented to the Chapter Quest, then the Ordinary in such cases, find any suspicion, is to empanel a jury of honest men within the same parish, and the party suspected in the meantime to be committed to the Bishop's Prison, to the Lord's Jail and Court."

It is said that the usual result of legal procedure against witches was to subject them for trial by two forms of ordeal. One was to be flung into the middle of the "Curragh Glass," a pool and bog in the valley below the Greeba Mountain. If the unfortunate person sank and drowned, he was deemed to be innocent and the body was recovered with reverence and duly received a Christian burial. If the poor wretch managed to struggle to the firm ground, however, there awaited two more ghastly alternatives for evidence of unnatural and ungodly power was already there for all to see, otherwise how could he have survived the Curragh Glass?

The alternatives now were either to be conducted to the stake and burnt alive, or to be imprisoned within a specially-constructed barrel, the interior of which was lined with inward-facing spikes. This barrel with its human contents was then rolled down the steep slope of the Slieu Whallian, above the Tynwald village of St. John's, a spot still commonly known to-day as Witches Hill. It is said that any person to be still alive when the barrel was re-opened became burnt at the stake anyhow . . . . such was the justice of those days.

I must say here that as far as the Isle of Man is concerned, these accounts of brutality seem to have been handed down over a long period, but could quite possibly have little foundation. Up to this point I was aware of only one actual burning having been carried out, that was in Castletown in 1617, when Margrate Ine Quane suffered not only the agonies of death at the stake, but had the additional horror of having her own little son tied beside her, to suffer the same fiendish form of execution.

Although I had only just found that poor Jony existed, I found myself becoming deeply concerned, all my thoughts about the island having been so far taken up with admiration for this beautiful home of my ancestors; but if old Aunt Jony had been foully illtreated and then put on a bonfire I might begin to have second thoughts about this paradise island with its friendly but superstitious natives.

European history is full of instances of the barbaric way in which the unfortunate beings accused of witchcraft were burned in the market squares, but even this must have been accepted as a merciful release to the pitiful creatures who might have suffered weeks of excruciating torture in some filthy dungeon; firstly for the extraction of a confession, and afterwards as punishment for the admitted offence.

I do not wish to dwell on the subject, for in the torturing of so-called witches European humanity must have sunk to its most revolting depths, but will mention a case quoted by G. B. Gardner in his "Witchcraft To-day," which concerns the tortures inflicted upon a woman in 1631 during the first day of her trial, being a translation from "Konig, Ausgeburten de Menschenwahns," page 130.

1. The hangman binds the woman, who is pregnant, and places her on the rack. Then he racked her till her heart would fain break.
2. When she did not confess, the torture was repeated . . . he cut off her hair, poured hot brandy over her head and burned it.
3. He placed sulphur in her armpits and burned it.
4. Her hands were tied behind her, she was hauled up to the ceiling and suddenly dropped down.
5. This hauling up and down was repeated for some hours, till the hangman and his helpers went to dinner.
6. When they returned, her feet and hands were tied upon her back, brandy was poured on her back and burned.
8. Then heavy weights were placed on her back and she was pulled up.
9. After this she was again stretched on the rack.
10. A spiked board was placed on her back, and she was again hauled up to the ceiling.
11. The master again ties her feet and hangs on them a block of fifty pounds . . .
12. The master . . . fixes her legs in a vice, tightening the jaws until the blood oozes out from her toes.
13. She was stretched and pinched again in various ways.
14. Now the hangman of Dreissigacker began the third grade of torture (Note: no indication of what he did).
15. The hangman's son-in-law hauled her up to the ceiling by her hands.

16. The hangman . . . . whipped her with a horse-whip.
17. She was placed in a vice where she remained for six hours.
18. She was mercilessly horsewhipped.

All this was done on the first day! (Note: Number 7 has been left off the list, but I don't suppose it was less painful than the others.)

The very thought of the excruciating pain that was brought about in this manner, and the tragic helplessness of the poor woman who would receive no mercy, and for whom the tortures would become more fiendishly inhuman as time went on, is sufficient to make one's flesh creep. The first thought then is to hope that this might be only one isolated incident. But this is not so . . . . the actual figures for the number of witches disposed of by torture and burning are absolutely appalling.

In the diocese of Como, no less than 1,000 souls perished within a particular year. Nearby Geneva slaughtered 500 in the space of three months.

In France, one historian says, "in the year 1520 an almost infinite number of sorcerers were put to death."

During one period in Germany, the nation's lustful delight in causing agony and suffering to defenceless individuals, male and female, accounted for the torture and execution of a figure given as "upward of 100,000."

This huge figure seems at first to be cold-blooded massacre on such a large scale that it is almost beyond comprehension, but with a little further reflection this

gruesome phase of that particular country's history becomes even more disturbing. For very recently, within my own lifetime, this same nation has carried out the annihilation of no less than five million human beings who had the misfortune to be born of Jewish origin. Even more disturbing is the realisation that the persons who caried out these atrocious doings thrive to-day in national prosperity, enjoying the "forgive-and-forget-it-ever-happened" world, making one wonder how much time will elapse before another excuse is found for carrying out wholesale bloodshed.

The prospective outcome of the unfortunate Jony's trial was most frightening, but it was essential that I should make every endeavour to find out what transpired at Ballaugh in that fateful year, three centuries ago. I searched through many books in both the Public Library and also the Museum Library, but it was all in vain. Apart from a brief mention that a charge of witchcraft had been made, no other writer had bothered to reveal the outcome of the trial.

I happened to mention to someone or other my immediate dilemma, when I received what must have been a most obvious solution indeed to anyone who was fully conversant with the affairs of the island.

"Why don't you go along to the Rolls Office and ask to see the Court Records of the case?"

"Do you mean the office where you can examine the title deeds of property and land?" I asked, remembering the helpful people who for the fee of two shillings had unearthed the documents of Ballawhane.

"Well, yes, more or less, because it is the same building but you go up the stairs to the office of the High Court. That's where they keep the records of

proceedings in the Manx Courts and the Court of Tynwald, there must be thousands of documents relating to the early history and development of the island in that building."

Without further ado I hurried off to find the solution to the problems of poor Jony's fate. Halfway up the stone steps leading to the High Court Office it suddenly occurred to me that the time was between one and two o'clock, and it seemed too optimistic to expect attention from any civil servants at lunchtime. However, having reached so far, I might as well find out the exact hours of business for future reference. At the top of the stairway, through a doorway, I came to a counter and as I approached it a young man stepped forward on the other side and wished me "Good-day."

I acknowledged his greeting and asked: "Would it be convenient to see the record of a court case, please?"

"Certainly, sir, which case do you want?" he replied pleasantly. So far so good, I thought to myself, but surely this friendly state of affairs can't last. As soon as I mentioned the date required, the smile will disappear from this young man's face, he'll ask who I am, why I am here, tell me to fill in a form in triplicate and come back in seven days, or else he'll just disappear from view and leave me standing at the counter for the rest of the afternoon.

"A case concerning Jony Tear at Ballaugh," I said, adding delicately " in the year 1638."

Without even batting an eyelid the counter-clerk swung round on his heel, stepped behind a screen, and to my amazement returned within a minute to hand over an old leather-bound volume with as little concern

as if I had asked to borrow a current telephone directory.

"There you are," he said, "I'm afraid this particular year has not been indexed, and you'll find it's mostly in Latin," he added apologetically.

Carefully accepting the precious book that had been compiled so long ago, I laid it on a nearby table, pulled up a chair and took out a small notebook with the intention of turning over page by page until I found mention of the required surname, and then to copy out the Latin words for subsequent translation.

Opening the book, anticipating some beautifully immaculate copper-plate penmanship, I found to my dismay and surprise that the pages were covered with the most careless-looking scribble. There seemed to be lists of abbreviations that resembed shorthand, and the whole book seemed to have been written in such haste that I could scarcely identify any of the letters whatsoever; so much so, that I turned the leaves all the way through the book and failed to identify even the word Ballaugh.

The genial official expressed his regret, for he too was unable to be of assistance, so I reluctantly handed back what had appeared to be an illegible accumulation of doctor's prescriptions and retraced my steps down the flight of stone stairs.

I was not admitting defeat, at least I knew where the information was available. I must return to the office one morning in the near future and be prepared to spend the entire day if necessary, until I had picked up one or two clues that would at least reveal which page or pages contained the case I wanted to learn so much about. I could then arrange for permission for

a photographic copy that could in turn be passed into the hands of some expert in this sort of matter.

During the rest of the day the thoughts of what might have gone on in the village of Ballaugh over three hundred years ago was continually in my mind, so much so, that my own imagination made my heart become sickened with disgust. Had some form of horrible interrogation taken place in that picturesque little northern village? Had some nearby barn once served as torture-chamber? And had the earthen floor of its dark interior once been lit by a flickering lantern throwing shadows on the barren walls? Shadows of a merciless interrogator, sitting up on an upturned barrow, paper in one hand and quill in the other, as stage by stage he ruthlessly demanded a confession from the mutilated and delirious, scarcely-living female form that was propped against the distant wall? Did that lantern light a sea of faces as the villagers leered across the barn to see the fiendish acts inflicted upon the woman they had called witch? Did the poor creature plead with them for mercy as she sprawled across the floor, grey hair hanging over bloodstained naked shoulders mumbling incoherently through swollen lips and broken teeth, her white face covered with hideously-discoloured patches, her feet all burnt and twisted and her hands with dislocated thumbs splayed out upon the straw in an abnormal position that seemed to be no longer members of her broken human frame?

My visit to the Isle of Man had started with the purpose of sifting fact from fiction, but at this stage I found myself, through the absence of a Latin translation, allowing my own imagination to create a nightmare of most horrifying magnitude. Fortunately this

state of affairs did not last long, as quite by chance I came across a small book written in 1891 by A. W. Moore. He mentions the "Seer" with whom John Train had been in conversation some years earlier, and also mentions that at the actual time of writing he was acquainted with "one of Teare's daughters who is still practising the art." But his most interesting words concern the punishments for witchcraft, and after mentioning the process of drowning in the bog, and the use of the barrel of spikes, he states:—

> "The following extracts from the Manx Episcopal and Civil Records show, however, that our forefathers dealt with these poor creatures in the seventeeth century, and later, in a milder fashion than they did, according to tradition, at an earlier date . . . .
>
> " '1638 – WHERAS JONY TEAR HATH BEEN PRESENTED BY THE CHAPTER QUEST UPON INFORMATION GIVEN THEM THAT SHE WAS SEEN TOGETHER WITH AN IRISH WOMAN IN A GILL PULLING STRANGE HERBS, AND WHEREAS THE SAID JONY TEAR HATH CLEARED HERSELF, HER SLANDERERS HAD TO ASK HER FORGIVENESS BEFORE THE CONGREGATION'."

This information was very pleasing indeed, and I was most gratified that this island with which is associated so many tales of either superstition or of smuggling should have displayed such a humane sense of reasoning at such an early date (witches were burned alive in Scotland until as late as 1722).

I could now continue joyfully in my research, for A. W. Moore's little book had run to ground the only instance in which there had been the slightest doubt about my long-dead namesakes having participated in "black" witchcraft, as opposed to the charm-healers, witch-doctors and herbalists who gained their reputation for use of the "white."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Charm

One of the telephoned introductions brought about at Laureston Nurseries was to a Mr Ramsey Quayle, a truly Manx-sounding name indeed, whose hotel on the Douglas Promenade I made it my business to visit a couple of nights later.

Like so many of their seaside compatriots, he and his family lived in the basement of their premises throughout the summer season.

It was down there that I was privileged to see the finest collection of old Manx books and papers I had so far encountered. Assembled in a large glass-fronted bookcase were precious volumes, the ownership of which would undoubtedly be the envy of many an ardent collector. I had found that many of the island's business and professional men treasured their own accumulation of historic books and pictures connected with their island, bartering and trading with each other, using the same skilful enthusiasm they had probably employed when swapping cigarette cards in their schooldays.

Most of them seem to know fairly accurately which editions were held by their rivals, and most improvements to collections are carried out on an exchange basis rather than by cash transactions. I had already listened to several tales by these fervent collectors. One told me of a splendid "find" amongst the dust and soot in the rafters of a very old cottage; another showed me a volume that had once spent several weeks exposed to wind and rain beside the dustbin of a vacated house.

There seemed to be a general acknowledgment, however, that Ramsey Quayle's collection was one of the best on the island, and included certain old Manx literary works, specimens of which were not even available at the museum.

This splendid collection, the product of his lifetime, plus that of his father before him, was by no means the only tribute of the quietly-spoken hotelier who welcomed me to his living quarters, for he was also said to possess a "charm for stopping the blood." In other words it was acknowledged locally, even to-day, that by Mr Quayle's utterance of a certain ancient incantation the bleeding of a wound could be arrested.

I questioned him about this alleged power, and was impressed by his sincerity and quiet modesty on the subject. He assured me that the charm had most definitely fulfilled its purpose on very many occasions over a period of years. I was eager to gain as much knowledge as possible from an actual charm-practitioner, for I had found that the islanders were generally rather reluctant to discuss their superstitious beliefs with a stranger. I longed to learn of singular incidents and perhaps meet some of those who had benefited from this ancient idea which seemed to have survived for thousands of years.

My host lit a cigarette, then, with obvious reluctance to indulge in this form of self-commendation slowly began to confirm the most up-to-date story I had heard so far.

It concerned a certain gentleman whose occupation was the sale and distribution of car and motor-cycle accessories. Two years ago he was on the island in connection with the T.T. races. At the end of one of the day's racing, when all the spectators and officials

were leaving the grandstands to make their way back into the town, the businessman had occasion to put some articles into the boot of his car when he had the misfortune to either stumble or lose his grip on the handle. Anyhow, the lid of the boot came into violent contact with his forehead. The edge was sharp and several people nearby heard a cry of pain, and turning quickly they saw the unfortunate gentleman stagger back holding both hands to his face.

Someone hurried off towards a phone box to find out where a doctor would be available, for although several doctors and first-aid teams had been standing by throughout the day, they had by now dispersed, and had intermingled with thousands of sightseers with whom the roads leading towards the sea were now completely congested. The people surrounding the injured man were waiting patiently for their colleagues to return from the telephone when suddenly one of them pointed across the road and said, "Isn't that Ramsey Quayle walking with the crowd over there?"

"Yes, so it is," confirmed another bystander, "I'll bet he could help," and promptly started running to catch the gentleman before he disappeared amongst the multitude.

The Magic Words

The possessor of the "charm" was duly brought before the injured salesman, and the magic words were softly mumbled . . . . no immediate change became noticeable; the patient still looked dejected and unimpressed as he stood there pathetically adorned with such a bloodsoaked headgear.

Just then the Samaritan returned from the 'phone box, a doctor had been contacted, and was at that moment waiting in his surgery to receive the

casualty. Without further thought of the charmer and his inoffensive little folk-lore ritual, the injured man was bundled into a car and driven off to receive what was deemed to be "proper" treatment.

In the doctor's surgery, this story reaches its fantastic conclusion, for when the expert hands removed the improvised bandage, and skilfully bathed away the congealed blood, the wound could not be found—THE SKIN WAS NOT EVEN BROKEN!

This certainly seemed to be one of the tallest of tall stories, but there are several people on the island to-day who can vouch for its authenticity.

I made several visits to Mr Quayle's hotel, and am very grateful for the free access I was granted to his valuable library. When he had satisfied himself that my continual questioning about the Manx folk-doctors and the powers of these charms, was by virtue of a genuine deeply-seated interest, he brought about a very pleasing surprise by offering to pass on the "charm" that I too might at some time be able to bring relief to a victim of misfortune in the same manner as my forefathers.

I was very pleased to accept this offer, and fully realised the extent of his generosity, for though the charm was merely a few words written on a piece of paper, its value was regarded with great reverence on the island—I doubt if anyone else can say that he has been privileged to receive the secret of Ramsey Quayle's blood-staunching powers.

Like many other fascinating old charms from a bygone era, the secret of this particular one could only be passed from one person to another when they were of different sexes. So a solemn procedure was carried out whereby the magic words were written down and handed by Mr Quayle to a lady, who, without even

opening the folded paper, placed it in the palm of my hand.

I read the quaint wording, and have since memorised it, but up to the present time have not had the opportunity of putting its powers to use.

Acts of blood-staunching and the successful treatment of illnesses by means of a few muttered words must surely be associated with the amount of faith borne by the patient, particularly when one realises that on many occasions my friend Ramsey had successfully transmitted his uncanny ability over the telephone. One butcher rings through at least once a year and just says "Give me the charm, Ramsey!" which means that his knife has slipped and he's probably gashed his hand again. There are a few moments of silence while the hotelier goes through the words in his mind, and then he says, "You'll be all right now."

"Thanks again Ramsey," comes the reply, and the butcher replaces the receiver confident that not only will the flow of blood quickly ease off, but that the wound will heal in a very short time.

This sort of incident could make one believe that all the "patients" who gain relief from the casting of a charm must necessarily be somewhat gullible, easily persuaded, and who still live an outdated sort of life, fraught with countless facets of superstition and imagination. But this is not the case, here on the island I found people who believed and indeed still do so, in the power of charms, yet judging by their other opinions such beliefs seem most unlikely to be accepted.

One such character was an old retired sail-maker from Port St. Mary. This white-haired gentleman with the kindly-looking eyes set within a weather-beaten face told me some of the stories about healing

by charms. Some of his earliest childhood memories still remained among the most vivid, for to his cottage home would come joiners running from a nearby workshop to bang upon the door shouting to his father that there had been an accident: for at that time, well past half-a-century ago, it was this gentleman's father who bore the blood-staunching charm.

Another of his yarns concerned the rearing of his baby daughter. He and his wife were very much concerned about the health and ultimate fate of their newly-acquired offspring, for the infant seemed to be in continual pain.

"Laying her in a bed was as if you had put her on a bunch of nettles," he told me in his picturesque Manx manner.

"So I went along to an old woman who was good with the charms and the herbs," he continued, going on to tell of carrying out the instructions which entailed the boiling of certain leaves in water, and later using the infusion for the bathing of the child.

"Did it work?" I asked, though knowing full well what the answer would be, for I was already well acquainted with the daughter in question, who was now a grown woman with a family of her own.

"Aye, it did indeed, she's ne'er given us the slightest trouble since that day," he replied, speaking almost as if his departed wife were at his side and his daughter still a schoolgirl.

The White Lady

Such was the old seafarer's beliefs on the subject of charms and folk-doctors, but it was a well-known fact that for many years of his married life he occupied a particular house that was said by all the community

to be haunted. Several people claimed to have seen a lady in white running down the stairs and disappearing through the solid stone wall, but the gentleman himself was undisturbed. He had never seen the ghost, did not believe such creatures even existed, and did nothing but ridicule the idea.

It was certainly a very old building and the story of visions of a white lady startling the occupants seemed to have been in vogue for a couple of hundred years, but its most recent occupant remained stolidly unaffected. He told me of the many times he had deliberately sat at the top of the stairs while the clock struck midnight, listening to the noises.

"It was only the old timbers easing themselves back into position after people had been walking on them all day, and there's nothing in that to get folks scared," he said with a twinkle in his eye that betrayed the fact that he had really enjoyed the whole affair.

"The newspapers became interested a few years back," he continued. "Some workmen were laying drains at the side of the house and there was quite a bit of excitement 'cause they found a skeleton."

I later saw some press-cuttings of this incident, the skeleton was found to be female, and was, of course, linked with the story of the white lady.

While sensational accounts snowballed round the island, the occupant of the house that was causing so much interest remained unconcerned. He'd not seen the ghost and still maintained his disbelief in its existence. Yet this same gentleman, even up to the time of my visit, held the implicit belief that with a few words written on a scrap of paper the most wondrous of supernatural deeds could be performed.

Having reached so far in my investigations into the family tradition, I felt that I might now begin to

carefully sort out a few conclusions. The witch-doctors of days gone by had been both charm healers, which might be looked upon as healing by faith, and also very knowledgeable herbalists, using prescriptions many of which could withstand the 20th century challenge and emerge from an extensive analysis as being a perfectly logical method of treating some bodily malignancy.

Dotted about the island to-day can be found the odd one or two people who are known to possess a single charm that is suitable for one isolated type of ailment, just as my grandfather, though living in Lancashire was sought after for the removal of warts. I have been told that people in Warrington afflicted with these unsightly growths would receive the charm, then leave his house carrying with them a few ashes from the hearth wrapped in a piece of paper. Many are said to have returned a couple of weeks later to report that their warts had disappeared.

There is, also, still to be found the occasional country person (usually beyond the three-score years and ten), who knows some of the laws of nature, and can derive a few medicinal preparations from the woodlands and hedgerows. But the men from Ballawhane knew all the Manx charms, and had to produce a herbal remedy to meet with almost any contingency in the form of sickness or injury to either human or animal.

I began to feel that the more remarkable of the cures, miraculous though they appeared, must have been greatly aided by the fact that the minds of the entire population had, over the generations, become "conditioned" to receive a faith-healing technique.

The practitioner whose conversation with historian John Train appears in his "History of the Isle of Man," would no doubt have been an expert with

both charms and herbs, but surely, his accepted title of FAIRY DOCTOR must have been a veritable diploma in the minds of all his patients.

Imagine some child, lying feverishly sick, maybe in a one-roomed cottage, listening while her harrassed parents discussed, and then decided to call in the man from Ballawhane. Father would bid his child "Goodbye," assuring her that he would go with all speed, then set off on foot or possibly astride a borrowed horse to journey over the mountain range and several miles across the Northern Plain.

Imagine the tense anxiety of those long hours awaiting his return, and then the excitement as a lookout on a hilltop comes scrambling down, shouting loudly to his mother:

"Father's coming along the mountain path, and the FAIRY DOCTOR'S with him."

The news itself would send a surge of hope through the little patient, for all thoughts of possible recovery would be hinged upon the arrival of that little man, so small in stature but bearing so vast a reputation. Just as to-day, in spite of the progress made in medical science, the confidence of the patient in the doctor's skill must be of major importance. The hours of waiting, the lookout's cry, and the sound of the pony's hooves would all assist in bringing the patient to an ideal state of mind for the receipt of beneficial treatment by the power of suggestion, which brings into the story an even more interesting aspect for consideration.

Some of the deeds were regarded as being no less than miraculous, but to what extent might they have been associated with some crude form of hypnotic influence?

Although the word hypnosis has only been in use

for little more than a century, being derived from the Greek word "sleep" by the surgeon James Braid in 1842, the history of the art extends to very ancient times. It was practised by the ancient Egyptians, the Syrians, Chaldeans, Babylonians, Hebrews, Indians, Chinese, Greeks and Romans.

The early history of hypnosis is closely associated with Egyptian religions, with the ceremonies of crystal gazing, and of treatments by laying-on of hands, with utterances of the great Greek oracles, with some of the most sacred Oriental mysteries, and with the confusion of the abnormal with the miraculous during the Middle Ages.

Like anything else affecting the delicate mechanism of the human body or mind, the use of hypnosis should not be trifled with. Indeed, my own initial experience was rather alarming. Shortly after reading a few articles on the subject, I was entertaining some friends at home, when, in the course of the evening hypnotism came under discussion.

One of my guests laughingly suggested "Why don't you see if you can put Jack to sleep?" referring to her husband, an intelligent, alert, and active fellow in his thirties, with an acute sense of humour, and an extensive repertoire of funny stories.

Jack Was Not Pretending

Resigning himself to a try-anything-once attitude, Jack obligingly settled into an armchair and paid attention to my voice as I spoke slowly and softly before the flickering fire. His reaction came so quickly and correctly that I felt sure he had read the same book as myself and was actually pulling my leg. But when I told him that the back of his hand had become

immune to pain, and I had subsequently drawn the point of a pin criss-cross over the skin without the slightest remonstrance, the realisation suddenly came to me that JACK WAS NOT PRETENDING!

My moment of triumph was instantly shattered by the thought that though my friend had easily become subjected to my hypnotic influence, I did not know whether I was capable of bringing him back to his normal condition.

In other circumstances I might have said "Never mind you Jack, I'm all right," and been assured of some witty repartee in return, but it was rather frightening to see him sitting there so becalmed, apparently waiting for my instructions.

"For heaven's sake do something, Denys!" appealed his wife, suddenly becoming distressed at the outcome of her jovial remark.

Jack appeared to be oblivious of any voice other than my own, so I told him that I would start counting, and as soon as I reached TEN he was to open his eyes, and would feel "happy and well."

"If you understand me you must nod your head." I said, but had to repeat my instructions firmly but softly two or three times before the sleeping head slowly nodded its understanding.

"You're going to be happy and well when I say 'TEN' Jack' Going to open your eyes and be happy and well. ONE . . . TWO . . . THREE . . . " I began deliberately, "Happy and well soon Jack. FOUR . . . FIVE . . . opening your eyes soon, Jack, EIGHT . . . ready to open your eyes, Jack, NINE . . . TEN . . . "

To everyone's relief, particularly mine, he opened his eyes, gave a sleepy smile, and within a few minutes was feeling on top of the world.

This had been a very simple form of experiment, the first I had attempted in this ancient' "art," which seems to be returning to favour again, being utilised with increasing frequency nowadays in cases of childbirth, the extraction of teeth, etc., and may well play a very important role in the medical world of the future.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Trees

Most people to-day if asked to bring their thoughts to bear on the subject of trees would fall into one or other of two categories. Firstly, the romantic individual might look upon every leaf and tiny twig as one of Nature's wonders, and find no difficulty in visualising a summer walk along some narrow pathway winding through an enchanting forest, with shafts of sunlight piercing through the foliage overhead and the silence broken only by the birds and one's own soft footfall on the carpet of bluebells.

The stark contrast to this idyllic picture would be the thoughts of a more practical-minded individual calling to mind the howl of a circular saw and the angry buzz of a planing machine. He would be far more interested in the resultant planks, spars, wood-pulp and firewood than in Nature's original masterpiece.

There would be very, very, few, if any, at all who would look upon a forest as the world's largest and most wonderful pharmaceutical store, from which one may obtain the necessary ingredients to bring relief from almost any kind of suffering, for unfortunately a knowledge of the medicinal power of the woodlands belongs to a generation gone by.

The concoctions used by the old wise Teares were in many cases almost identical to those prepared and used successfully by the knowledgeable monks of even earlier centuries, but in spite of this long-standing reputation, the majority of their remedies have rapidly fallen into disuse during recent years.

One noticeable exception is the use of the bark of the elm. This is still looked upon as one of the most valuable articles in the botanical practice for cases of weakness and inflamation of the stomach; it has a wonderful soothing and healing action on all parts it comes into contact with, and is said to possess as much nutritional value as oatmeal. It is easily purchased in finely-powered form from chemists and herbalists, and a very pleasant convalescent gruel can be made by mixing a tablespoonful of "slippery elm" to a creamy paste with a small amount of water before adding half a pint of hot milk or water and sweetening with either sugar or a spoonful of honey.

The virtue of the elm tree was brought vividly to the notice of the earliest British settlers in Canada, who rolled westward in their wagon trains full of great ambitions, pushing further and further each spring across the vast continent that once took me five days and nights to cross by express train. Many of these brave adventurers were caught tragically unprepared for the bitter winter, and were faced with cold starvation. Some eked out a desperate existence gnawing at the timber, and eating leaves and berries found in the snow-bound forests, but larger numbers of these pioneers did not live to take advantage of their land of opportunity. In the spring, winding along the trails now stretching out across the virgin wastes, would be fresh immigrants, who, finding gruesome remains, would piece together the pitiful story of their predecessors' fate. Certain small communities, however, were found not only to have survived, but actually to have gained weight and strength during the winter by copying the long-established Indian recipe of chopped elm bark boiled in water.

Slippery Elm In Porridge

Accounts similar to these may be found in Egypt, where, it is alleged, the wandering Arabs can subsist entirely on the bark of the acacia tree. I myself have acquired quite a liking for slippery-elm, and invariably flavour my porridge or some other cereal with about half a spoonful each morning. I think it keeps my digestive organs in trim throughout the year.

When people of days gone by made their way through the undergrowth of the forests, carefully searching for particular types of leaves or bark with which to make their home-made medicines, they must have felt great confidence in their concoctions. Not only by virtue of the attributes thereof with which they had been instilled since childhood, but also from the fact that they were deriving the raw materials from which they hoped to obtain strength and long life, from not only the strongest, but also the longest-lived growths in the world.

The common oak, the Hercules of the British forests, is a veritable pillar of silent strength, sustaining an enormous weight of timber, and actually adding to its own burden year by year and continually pushing it even higher, a fantastic feat which many oaks have already carried out unceasingly for over a thousand years. Oak bark, once used for tanning leather, was also recognised for its diuretic qualities, producing a valuable medicine for patients having difficulty in passing urine, and at various stages of history, leaves of the oak were bruised and applied to wounds on the battlefield.

When a member of a household became troubled

with some form of skin irritation, I am sure that many a young lad must have been quite pleased when handed a bottle and a spoon and told to "Go and collect some medicine for the ITCH," for this gave him a legitimate excuse to go scrambling up oak trees without fear of a parental reprimand, to search within the forks of branches and other hollows for little pools of water which were to be carefully spooned into the bottle.

No doubt the people living in that age would replenish their stocks from Nature's medicine chest with far more respect and intelligence than the vandals of to-day, who strip a tree of its bark, dooming it to inevitable destruction, for no other reason whatsoever than the display of their own distasteful disposition.

There are known to be almost three hundred different species of oak, but unfortunately very few are found in the Isle of Man, and even these are of only a small and stunted variety. One noticeable feature of the Manx landscape is, however, the abundant growth of ash trees: there are strong well-nourished specimens thriving in the sheltered glens, while their dwarfed and twisted cousins struggle for a meagre existence by the bleak and barren mountain road sides.

The wood is hard, and very strong, thus being suitable for the manufacture of oars, while a twig of ash can be looked upon as a lucky token (like a four-leaved clover), if you are fortunate enough to come across one bearing an even number of leaves; such a find is rather exceptional, for normally a twig will grow one single leaf at the extreme tip and the rest in pairs along its stem. A similar superstition can be found in Cornwall, where the "two-topped" ash twig with its two leaves at the top is said to bring good luck.

In the days when unclean and scabby scalps were

not uncommon, the bark was collected, dried and burnt, and the resulting ash when dissolved in warm water was used for washing and as a disinfectant rinse. (I wonder if the name of the tree owes its derivation to this practice?).

The leaves were also valued, and in June each year the old Fairy Doctor would gather a supply from those same ash trees that the Rev. Paton saw in the Gat-y-Whing hollow, dry them firstly in the sunshine, and finally at the fireside of his little whitewashed cottage until they became so brittle that he could crumble them to powder in his hands. This powder was then stored in well-corked bottles, and would become available throughout the subsequent twelve months for the treatment of rheumatic ailments, a teaspoonful of the powder being boiled in a pint of water and the strained infusion given to the patient at the rate of one teacupful morning and night.

A more concentrated solution made by boiling half an ounce of the powdered leaves in the same quantity of water made a very effective laxative.

This sort of knowledge is almost lost in England to-day, but I think many of these old-fashioned remedies still have a definite place in the lives of the country folk in France. I myself have been indebted to them on several occasions in recent years when my French friends have given me an infusion of leaves of the lime tree (Linden or Teil), to ease my stomach-ache and biliousness subsequent upon an over-enthusiastic celebration involving too many different wines or too much champagne.

Two other trees mentioned in the article on Ballawhane in the Parish Magazine were the bay and the elder. The latter is recognised in England for its

medicinal value in the treatment of certain ailments, but in the Isle of Man it is looked upon as being the tree from which Judas hanged himself, and it can still be seen growing close to the older cottages and farmhouses where it was once specially planted as the finest precaution one could take against the evil eye of the witches.

The bay tree, however, we must look upon as being one of the richest sources of medical material that the old doctor could wish to have growing at his doorstep, for not only are the leaves, the berries and the bark useful, but even the roots below the ground were accredited with curative powers. To utilise these roots, one had to dig at the driest time of the year, carefully discarding any that showed signs of rotting or becoming wormeaten, wash them thoroughly then dry them in the sunshine. This means of drying was deemed to be the most beneficial, but a finishing-off treatment in a warm oven was permissible. Most roots collected and dried were expected to keep wholesome for at least one year, but a general rule was "the larger the root the longer it keeps." From the outer skin or bark of the root, a preparation was made said to be capable of dissolving gallstones and removing obstructions of the liver.

Both leaves and bark were used to assist the healing of wounds, but the most versatile items of all were the berries: these were very effective against the stings of wasps and bees, and when dried and powdered were mixed with honey and administered in the treatment of consumption. These same berries were also used to produce a valuable kind of massaging oil. I have a typical recipe for the incorporation of the medicinal

properties of a plant with oil (usually olive or linseed) which runs as follows: –

> "Having bruised the berries, put them into an earthen pot, cover the pot with paper and set in the sun about a fortnight or so, according as the sun is in heat: then having warmed it well by the fire, squeeze very hard in a press and add as many more herbs to the same oil: bruise the herbs in like manner and set them in the sun as before; the oftener you repeat this, the stronger the oil will be; at last when you think it is strong enough, boil both oil and herbs together till the juice is consumed, which you will know by its ceasing to bubble, and the herbs will be crisp; then strain it while it is hot and keep it in a stone or glass vessel for your use."

In the case of this procedure being carried out with the berries of the bay tree, you were left with a medical preparation that was ready for use on "affectations of the joints, nerves, arteries, stomach, belly or womb, palsies, convulsions, cramp and tremblings."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Stories in Verse

One of the most knowledgeable people on the subject of folk-lore must have been the well-loved poet, the Rev. T. E. Brown (1830-97). In one corner of the Douglas Museum I had already seen his memorial, and oak-panelled room with beautifully-designed stained glass windows which depict characters and scenes from some of his works. This was created some years ago by public subscriptions from Manx people living all over the world to mark the centenary of his birth.

His memory is particularly dear to Manx people in that he set himself to record in his dialect verse the manners, speech and customs of the island upon which he had been born and which he loved so deeply. Had this good man been alive to-day his assistance in my research would have been of immense value, but as it was, I was very pleased to go through the words he had written in his time.

One particular group of poems is written entirely in a quaint Manx dialect of his day, set within the island, and known as the Fo'cs'le Yarns. Each poem is of considerable length and takes several hours of very careful reading to be sure of gaining the correct understanding of the story. One such yarn, which occupies no less than eighty pages in a book of his collected poems, is called "The Manx Witch."

This particular poem (written in 1889), tells the story of the courtship of the beautiful daughter of a local farmer carried out simultaneously by two strapping young lads who worked in the Laxey lead mines. It seemed from the very start that a violent quarrel

was inevitable between these two stalwarts in competition for the maiden's hand. Sure enough a fight took place, for two hours they wrestled and punched at one another on the brink of a disused mine shaft until both lay down in exhaustion. Prior to both taking an interest in the damsel they had been the very best of friends, so as they lay on the grass regaining strength, they began to try and reason why this unfortunate state of affairs had arisen.

Instead of pursuing the test of who was the better man, they decided that they should still be the closest of friends until such time as the lady made her choice, and came to the conclusion that they would never have been otherwise, had it not been for some outside evil influence.

It would be of satisfaction to both of them if someone could be found on which to place the blame, and it so happened that the girl, about whom the controversy had developed, had an eccentric aunt, and it was upon this unfortunate lady that the suspicion fell. They decided that she must have cast the "evil eye" upon them both, and in course of the lines in which they say she is a witch of the blackest and most wicked kind imaginable, they bring about a comparison with the pleasant, non-malicious kind of "white witchcraft" as used by a woman known as Sally Tear who sells lucky charms to the fishermen:—

A Wutch? Of course she was a wutch,
And a black wutch, the wuss that's goin'—
The white is—well, I'm hardly knowin'
Is the lek in: but these ould things
"That's sellin' charms to sailors, rings,
Papers, ye know—why, bless my sowl!
Here's one on me—it's middlin' oul',

Wore I don't know the teens of years
On my heart here, look, la! Sally Tear's
The woman that sould it—in Castletown-
Queen Street—aye—and half-a-crown . . . .
I s'pose the most of ye's got the lek
Somewhere hung around your neck.

The selling of lucky charms to crews of sailing ships had been associated with the island for a very long time, in fact, we are told by Ranulph Higden that "In the Ilonde of Mann is sortilege and witchcraft used; for women there do sell to shipmen wynde, as it were closed under three knottes of threde, so that the more wynde he would have, the more knottes he must undo." (Polychronicon, Rolls Series.)

"Workin' the White!"

As Brown's stories seem to be mostly based on fact I presume that this Sally must have been quite a well-known character in Castletown at one time, but while she was selling her lucky charms there was a more important member of the family carrying out his wonderful herbal remedies at Ballawhane, for twenty pages later on, when these two young men are still wondering how they can overcome the power of the evil eye, there is again mention of the white witchcraft:—

And—Would they try THE BALLAWHANE?
And axin' me. "Aw, that's no use
At all," I says: "it's the very deuce,"
I says, "this wutchin'—the horridest goin',
Black, yes, black." But sure they were knowin'

THE BALLAWHANE was workin' the white?
"Aw, different, bless ye! Different quite!
Lek cows and that—and gives you some sperrit,
Or herbs in a bottle; and as soon as you'll get it,
In your fist, the baste, that's very lekly
Miles away, is batthar directly.
Aw, I've seen the ould chap, and the big book
And the wise he'll talk, and the sollum he'll look
Aw, different, aw, that's understood
Aw, doin' good, doin' good.

An explanatory note at the bottom of the page states that The Ballawhane is "a celebrated herb doctor."

Our two heroes eventually decide that you can't set a witch to bewitch a witch, and in any case such a thing was not in old Ballawhane's line of business, so they think in terms of shooting her with a silver bullet, or getting the authorities to roll her down Peel Hill inside a barrel of inward-pointing spikes, the procedure of earlier years, where any poor wretch suspected of witchcraft who was still alive at the end of this ordeal was regarded as guilty and executed accordingly. The story ends with the witch being found dead at the bottom of the disused mine shaft, the young lady marries the man of her choice, and even his unsuccessful companion seems quite satisfied with the way things have turned out.

The interesting point as far as I was concerned was of course the mention of Ballawhane, particularly the mention of the "big book" belonging to the old herbal doctor: this was the second occasion that I had read about it up to now, but was not in a position to decide whether or not such a document really existed

. . . it would certainly make a wonderful day for me if I happened to locate it in the course of my enquiries.

If such a book were unearthed it would most certainly be written in Manx, and there are only a handful of people who would be capable of carrying out an accurate translation. I do, however, possess a book, very old it is, which contains some simple Manx herbal remedies, a few of which I give here with the English translation: —

FLEE, GRUNDSYL, AS LHUSS NY MOAL MOIRREY, BROOJIT, DAA CLAGH, CLABBAG SON BROOGHYN. (Chickweed, groundsel, and marsh-mallow, bruised between two stones, poultice for bruises.)

DUILLAGYN DRESS BROIET, SON SOOILLYN GONNAGH. (Briar leaves boiled, for sore eyes.)

RASS LIEEN, MIE SON CLABBAG, AS ER SON FEAYRAGHT AS MOUGHANE. (Linseed, good for poultice, and for cold and cough.)

DUILLAGYN CABBASH BROIET, MIE SON CLEEAU GHONNAGH. (Boiled cabbage leaves, good for sore breast.)

WOISHLEEYN BROOJIT, MARISH SMARREY MUCK, MIE SON YN ROSE. (Wall pennywort, bruised with lard, good for erysipelas.)

DUILLAG, YN DUILLAG DY VE SKEAYLT ER LURGEY GHONNAGH. (Plantain, the leaf to be spread on a sore leg.)

VA LUSS YN OLLAGH CURRIT DA LHEIYEE. (The cattle herb angelica, to be given to calves.)

From the poem "Bella Gorry" we can learn that T. E. Brown was thinking of some little cottage in very

close proximity to the home of the Fairy-Doctor, for he opens as follows:—

Westward to Jurby, eastward if you look,
The coast runs level to the point of Ayre,
A waste of sand, sea holly, and wild thyme—
Wild thyme and bent. The Mull of Galloway
Is opposite. Adown the farthest west,
Not visible now, lie stretched the hills of Morne.

A cottage, did you say? Yes, once it was;
A ruin now—the naked gables stand
Roofless—the walls are clay, save where round stones,
Picked from the beach, supply the mason's art
With base Cyclopean. See the narrow hole
That served for window! see the poor dead hearth.

The Good "Fairies"!

He then goes on to relate the story of a young unmarried woman who came to work for Henry Tear during the harvest. She was from the south of the island, and a complete stranger to the rest of the villagers. She had no home, but it was found that, in a little home-made den, amid the sandhills, she was trying to bring up a tiny baby girl. She returned from toiling in the fields one day to find that her precious little secret had been discovered, for there were all the good people who lived in the vicinity busily digging with spades, and carrying stones to build the poor girl a home. The job was finished in seven days and in that same cottage, which she kept spotless, Miss Bella Gorry lived for the rest of her days. The baby girl

grew up and was a very intelligent school girl, obtained a job in service with an English family living in Ramsey, and in due course went to live in Liverpool with them when they left the island. Each time she returned to her home for a few days' holiday she received a great welcome from the villagers, for she had developed into an extremely beautiful woman. Ten years passed, and then came news that there was to be a marriage. The happy couple came over to the island for their honeymoon and visited the little cottage home, but alas! this very visit signified that the tiny baby poor Bella had sheltered in the sand was now mature, and whether she thought that now her purpose was complete, or whether perhaps she looked upon the radiant bride and then thought of her own tragic womanhood, we will never know, for on that same night the unfortunate Bella Gorry passed away.

So many true stories could have been told of the Ballawhane folk-doctors that the association of their names with any fictional creation seems unnecessary, but I would very much like to see a copy of a play that I understand was once written by a well known personality of the island, Canon Quine, entitled "The Fairy Doctor," but there seemed to be no record of it at the museum.

One interesting book that I have managed to gain possession of is a collection of fifty or so Manx Fairy Tales, produced in printed form by Miss Morrison of Peel about thirty years ago. Most of the children's stories are about the deeds of the giants, the Little People, the mermaids, water goblins, and suchlike which were said to have taken place on and around the island a long, long, time ago. One story with a much

more recent association bears the same title as the elusive play "The Fairy Doctor."

With a simple once-upon-a-time theme, the story is told of a travelling tailor who used to go from house to house about the island, taking measurements and making clothes. For a long time he had been trying to see Charles Teare of Ballawhane, but this gentleman was always so busily occupied here and there that the tailor considered himself very fortunate indeed when he called at the house one day and found the much-sought-after Charles was inside.

At this point of the story the reader is told that the Ballawhane personality had power over the fishes of the sea, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the fields . . . . he got along well with the Lil' Ones too!

In fact, he was going to have supper with the Little Ones that very evening. He had very little time to spare, could not possibly wait while the tailor took measurements for his next suit of clothes, but if the tailor cared to join him in the evening's revelries he would be quite welcome to do so. This offer was eagerly accepted, for the tailor had not yet seen the fairy folk, the invitation was subjected to one strict condition: —

"There's one promise I'll be wantin' from thee— no matter what thou'll see, thou mustn't spake back, or it'll be all over with thee," warned old Charles.

The promise was faithfully given that no matter what happened he wouldn't breathe a word.

The tailor did not have a horse for the occasion, but such a contingency was a mere trifle to a witch-doctor of Charles' calibre: he was seen to take something out of the house, walk a few paces away, and then to turn round, leading a horse which had apparently been conjured out of thin air.

With a helping hand the tailor mounted on to the animal's back, and away they went for the fairy rendezvous. Over hedges and ditches they went "on and on like the very hommers," till they came to the bank of a river. The horses seemed to know their way, although it was night, and each gave a terrific leap across the water.

The thrill of flying through the air on horseback was too much for the unaccustomed craftsman, and he committed the unforgivable error of opening his mouth and shouting "Oh, Lord, what a jump!"

Next moment, his fairy ride was over, the spell broken and he fell, Flop! in a bog, the horse had gone, he was alone in the dark, holding a lapboard* between his legs. Next morning as he was seen to be all "slaaed with slush, as quiet as a mouse, every bit of steam took out of him." People asked if he had enjoyed a good night out. He replied "Aw, navar no more, navar no more!"

* A board held in the lap of the tailor when working.

"OLD DANIEL"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Whenever I was in the company of my Manx friend Tom, he never missed an opportunity to glorify the wonderful island, to which he so proudly belonged, but such salesmanship was entirely unnecessary as far as I was concerned, having already appreciated the exhilarating freshness of the air, so much more pure and sweet than that of Merseyside.

I had also noticed how the streets were kept free of litter, and welcomed the absence of industrial soot and grime upon the buildings, and already envied the casual ease with which the residents seemed to go about their daily affairs. In fact, I was giving very serious thought to the possibility of sinking my roots in the isle of enchantment, which my forefathers had forsaken.

One particular evening, however, I was quite sure that even Tom would be at a loss to find a good word for his precious homeland, for as he pulled up in his car outside my hotel, torrential rain was beating on to the promenade, now deserted. Angry gusts of wind whipped both rain and salty spray from the waves, breaking over the sea front, mercilessly against the buildings. This was indeed a night absolutely unfit for the proverbial dog.

Plunging across the pavement and opening the door of Tom's car, was like standing fully clothed under a cold shower and trying to turn off the tap. The few seconds it took me to flop into position beside the driver were quite sufficient to give me a minor soaking, even the slamming of the door was to the accompani-

ment of a shattering clap of thunder from directly overhead.

"What can you say for the wonderful island to-night?" I challenged, wiping my face with a handkerchief.

"I'll show you something exciting," he replied, apparently quite undaunted by my opening inference.

Peering between the busy windscreen wipers, I watched the downpour bouncing knee-high from the glistening roadway as my driver left the promenade, to sweep along the quayside, then to turn sharply left in the direction of Port Soderick. Left again took us on the far side of the harbour where, without a living soul in sight, we took a right-hand fork and began to climb steeply up the coastal road.

Up and up, the motor climbed far above the Douglas rooftops until my colleague finally reached his required vantage point. The vibration from the engine ceased and the handbrake was firmly applied, a point which received my particular observation, for by looking down from the window at my shoulder I could see the sickening possibility of a runaway vehicle plunging helplessly down on to the jagged rocks three hundred feet below.

"Now just you watch the lightning flash across the sea, Denys, it's a magnificent sight. There! There it is!" he shouted above the sound of the rain beating upon the roof of the car. The angry black waters were illuminated by a brilliant blue flash, followed almost immediately by the shattering roar as the heavens were torn apart.

"Heaven help any fishing boats out in this," I said as the flashes came again and again.

The Storm Moved On

"It won't last long," responded my knowledgeable friend.

He was quite right too, for even while we watched it was very noticeable that the storm was moving further away into the distance. The thunder became a mere rumble far away, and once again the skies over the Isle of Man began to clear.

Back once more at his semi-detched house on the outskirts of Douglas, Tom looked out of the window, saw the rain had stopped and became restless.

"We've got a couple of hours daylight left, the countryside looks its best after a downpour, where would you like to go?"

This seemed the ideal opportunity to follow up some information gained at the museum, of trying to locate the exact spot where a character known as "Little Daniel" had been laid to rest in the churchyard at Santon, a couple of hundred years ago. I made this suggestion and it was readily accepted.

This time Tom's son was driving the car, with learner's plates attached, as we left Douglas behind and took the road running south-west towards Castletown.

The village of Santon is the sort of place that, having found marked on the map, you go driving along the road keeping a look out for, only to find eventually that you have unwittingly passed right through it without noticing it, but under his father's instructions my young chauffeur had no difficulty in driving straight to the old church, built about 1770 on the site of an ancient keill.

Two objects usually mentioned by writers or

pointed out to visitors are, firstly, the relic by the door (said to be the only Roman "monument" on the island) and secondly a particularly large tombstone under which lie seven parsons, all of the same family.

These objects were of little interest to me, however, and as I entered the churchyard with my two companions, we immediately separated each to make an individual search in different directions for Old Daniel.

Searching for a gravestone that has been erected for say, only fifty years or so is quite an easy matter, for the writing is quite legible, and the stones themselves have been laid according to a definite plan. If you are looking for a stone one hundred years old, your task is much more difficult, for after exposure to wind and rain there are so many inscriptions sadly weather-beaten and obscured with moss that they are difficult to decipher without scratching away letter by letter. But if the particular stone you wish to see happens to have been erected nearly two hundred years ago, there are many greater obstacles to contend with.

I did not even know whether it was a stone that stood upright, or one that lay flat — it might even originally have been an upright model but now lay in the grass broken in different pieces, in fact, I saw quite a few old-timers lying there like a weighty jigsaw. Sometimes I was carefully trying to read one difficult inscription when I would realise that below my feet lay yet another one, perhaps with most of the writing already trodden away.

From stone to stone I moved around the churchyard, sometimes knee deep in wet grass, and occasionally looking across at my companions, wondering if they might be losing some of their enthusiasm, and

doubting the possibility of our actually stumbling across the ancient souvenir.

My own hopes were beginning to fade a little when I heard Tom softly call from the other side of the church:

"Over here, Denys! This is the one."

Sure enough, there stood the epitaph to Old Daniel, still erect, and there were the words composed in his memory by Sir Wadsworth Busk, who was at that time Attorney-General, and at whose wish the actual stone had been erected:—

Here friends is Little Daniel's tomb,
To Joseph's years he did arrive,
Sloth killing thousands in their bloom,
While labour kept poor Dan alive,
How strange, yet true, full seventy years,
Was his wife happy—in her Tears.

Born 1677 Died 1787 . . . 110 years.

Going The Houses

In the museum at Douglas I had learned that Old Daniel had spent the latter years of his life "going the houses" meaning more or less existing by begging.

Standing there before his burial place, I presumed he must have no doubt lived with his wife until her death, by which time he was likely to be about ninety years of age; and then perhaps it was for the last twenty years of his life that he walked around the island. I had read that he was actually a native of Andreas, and looked forward to the opportunity of checking for further information shortly.

I had also learned that he was a likeable old fellow and that if he arrived at a farm at the end of the day, most farmers would be quite pleased to see his wrinkled face, and would offer a bit of food and the opportunity to shelter in the barn for the night. Then off he would wander the following morning, and with a bit of luck manage to drop in for a bit of breakfast at the next farm. but the words of the Attorney-General give the impression that he must actually have been a "worker" up to the bitter end.

No doubt he must have been looked upon as an excellent walking newspaper, and would carry the gossip from village to village in the course of his wanderings. Perhaps the farmers were quite keen to give the old chap an occasional meal for the privilege of hearing him quote the latest fatstock prices, and to learn the condition of the crops further round the coast.

I had not yet verified for certain the association of Old Daniel with the healing tradition: he was not yet born when poor Jony Tear stood trial for administering mysterious herbal mixtures, and had been dead for ten years by the time Feltham visited the island and reported that "this family have long been in possession of some valuable medicinal preparations": but obviously in the course of his lifetime he must have accumulated an absolute wealth of knowledge about folk medicine, charm healing and herbalism. If indeed he was one of the practising witch-doctors, as the years mounted up he must have been an astounding advert for his own prescriptions. The only other item of information I had obtained at that stage lay in a few words written about the time of his death expressing the fact that many people credited him with being

actually older than the 110 years quoted by Sir Wadsworth Busk.

Had I visited the churchyard alone, I would have been quite pleased to enjoy the nostalgic atmosphere so easy to build up in my mind as I stood there in the grass. Once I had made a note of the writing chiselled into the masonry my two friends were ready to return to the car, otherwise I could have enjoyed at least a further half-hour just visualising the actual burial ceremony. As the Attorney-General was taking such an interest in the arrangements (he paid for the tombstone, but I don't know whether he attended the ceremony or not), I imagine there would be quite a large congregation to pay their last respects, especially as Old Daniel was said to be known by almost every person on the island. Even as I rode along in the car my imagination was trying to create a picture of the four bearers, wondering how they would be dressed as they gently lowered the shrivelled little body to the place where it has rested for the last couple of centuries.

We were making our return via a different route from that taken earlier, and using the main highway between Douglas and Ronaldsway Airport. Again I occupied the rear seat, and opening my ordnance survey map was able to see that between the point at which we had joined the main road and the outskirts of Douglas, we were bound to cross the famous Ballalona Fairy Bridge, where visitors are led to believe that the locals always bid "Good-day" to the fairies each time they cross.

From my advantageous position in the car I would be able to study the reactions of father and son sitting in front. As we approached and passed the notice board proclaiming this renowned portion of the road-

way, neither Manxman mentioned a word about it. I watched carefully, and as our wheels actually crossed the sacred section, I saw that Tom didn't appear to have moved a muscle, but for a split second his son's hand definitely left the steering wheel to make a very quick and hardly noticeable salutation. Fortunately this roadway is not on the route used for the motor-cycle races, for I am sure that if any motor-cyclist tried waving to the fairies in the course of a race, the consequences would prove fatal.

My own observation probably summed up the opinion of the entire island, half of whom ignore the idea completely while the remainder say nothing, but nevertheless, signify that slight acknowledgment to the "Li'l people" lest there be some very remote chance of misfortune, much the same as English people walk round a ladder. I was once in conversation with an octogenarian gentleman in Douglas when mention was made of the much-publicised Fairy Bridge.

"I've crossed that bridge many a hundred times," he said, "but I've only raised my hat to the fairies once."

"What made you do it on that one occasion?" I asked innocently.

"Because I was travelling with a coach-load of Scottish visitors," replied the Manxman, chuckling heartily as his favourite joke was driven home once more.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Vaccination

Just over a century ago it could be said that out of every three men practising as, and actually calling themselves doctors, two had no semblance of professional qualifications whatsoever, except a readiness to treat disease. The House of Commons was told that out of 1,830 men who had applied in 1841 for appointments as doctors under the Poor Law, 320 carried no qualfications in surgery, 323 had no qualifications in medicine and 233 were innocent of any professional approval. Yet it was legally possible for every one of these men to become appointed to posts as Poor Law doctors. When, a little later, in 1853, the names listed in the medical directories were analysed, it was found that 11,808 were qualified, but no less than 21,531 had no qualifications.

Attempts were made to remedy this situation. A radius of seven miles of London was under the jurisdiction of the Royal College of Physicians, and in Edinburgh and Glasgow the doctors were required to be graduates of medical schools. With the exception of these three cities, a man had merely to call himself "doctor" and he became open to treat the sick, maimed and suffering according to his own opinions.

At first this situation might be thought to be deplorable but with a little further consideration one can realise that at that time the word "reputation" was of far greater importance than qualification. I feel sure that a doctor who was not achieving a certain amount of successful cures was not likely to make himself a

livelihood; on the other hand, the man who became recognised by the population for his ability to almost work miracles would indeed establish a reputation which would be held in far higher esteem than a dozen sets of letters behind his signature.

Joseph Train, the historian of the last century, whose literary works have been quoted by practically every successive individual who has endeavoured to produce anything on paper concerning the island's history, seems to have got along very well with old Seer Teare. We learn from his "History of the Isle of Man" that they spent at least one evening in each other's company "listening to some singular stories from the Doctor," he writes. But I found, however, that in the last chapter of Volume II of these works, when reference is made to the disastrous outbreak of cholera on the island in 1832, Train uses some rather scathing remarks:—

> "Such is the blind reliance on those imposters called 'fairy doctors,' and female empirics that some of the people affected with the malady refused all medical aid or interference on the part of the regular practitioners, having more faith in charms, and in the mysterious virtue ascribed to certain plants, than in the skill of the most experienced physician or pharmacopolist. Fairy Doctors and certain old women were brought from the most remote parts of the island to Castletown and Douglas, to administer to those unfortunate persons who were suffering under the dreadful epidemic; while all those of the school of Esculapius remained, not only unemployed, but were obliged to keep out of the way."

Outbreak of Smallpox

A few years later the island, like the rest of the British Isles, was struck with small-pox, and once again Train takes the opportunity of pointing an accusing finger at the old man:—

> "Another singular instance of the influence of the empirics of the order of Seer Teare, over the minds of the people, occurred in 1837. The small-pox made great havoc in Douglas, and yet the majority of the inhabitants rejected with scorn the 'genuine variola,' even when gratuitously offered by all the humane practitioners in medicine."

I have been unable to learn whether the old witch-doctor was actually opposed to vaccination, or whether he had become at cross-purposes with Train for carrying out his own vaccinations in the arm-to-arm method, which was in general use throughout the United Kingdom at one time. When sores on an infected baby reached a certain stage, the discharge would be used, by direct contact, to "vaccinate" as many as thirty other babies, some of whom would possibly be subjected to a similar discomfort a short while later when they themselves became donors. This infectious pus was also said to be sometimes dried and put on ivory points for future use. Bass states in his "History of Medicine" (1889), that "the communication of the natural small-pox to the healthy, in order to protect them from the natural disease, reaches back into hoary antiquity."

Restrict It To Doctors

The Manx Sun, on 17th November, 1837, advocated that action should be taken by the insular government, confining public medical practice to qualified practitioners only, and refers to "iniquitous practices," when reporting that a certain "Cannie Carls" (crafty rustic) had carried out as many as over one hundred vaccinations in the space of the past few days.

At this time, the virtues of the recently discovered treatment by vaccination with cow-pox were receiving world-wide acclaim. A letter from Dr. H. R. Oswald of Douglas urging government compulsion was received and published by the local press:—

> "For my own part, I can state confidently that three or four times every year I have, as far as my means and opportunity went as a private practitioner, offered vaccination to all who chose to avail themselves of the opportunity; and have so often been chagrined to witness only a very few, amongst the poor, avail themselves of the offer; nay, some respectable, but illiterate, people have rejected my practice, broadly saying "IF I HAD TWENTY CHILDREN I WOULD NOT HAVE THE COW-POX PUT ON EVEN ONE OF THEM"! In speaking of cow-pox, a later writer says that vaccine inoculation has passed with rapid progress over every quarter of the globe from the Arctic Circle to the extremes of Asia and Africa, and been adopted by civilised and uncivilised nations, by blacks as well as by whites, by the Finn, the Hottentot, and the Hindoo. In the Isle

of Man, however, it is laughed at and not encouraged by the government.

Signed H. R. Oswald, Douglas, 9/11/1837."

It must have been a very big decision for parents who had brought a little child into the world, carefully fed it on fish fresh from the sea, and vegetables grown at the side of the cottage, to watch the little body grow strong and healthy in the sunshine and breathing the clean island air and then to be confronted with this new idea for the prevention of small-pox, the deliberate infection of their precious little offspring with some sort of cattle disease.

Though most of the world had blindly accepted this latest advancement in medical science as the "true and genuine life-preserving fluid," the Manx folk still possessed a deeply inherited respect for their old herb-doctor.

The very method by which this liquid was, and still is, obtained from the sores of a sick animal seemed primitive, barbaric and against the common-sense laws of nature. Maybe medical men of the future will someday look back upon this practice with horror. Indeed, it is already possible to read at least one critical publication* on the subject, where an accumulation of data presents a most disturbing picture. Figures are given to show that, in some years, more people die from the effects of the vaccination than from the disease it is meant to prevent.

Very recently M.P.'s were told in the Commons that 24 people had died from smallpox in Britain during the year ended 30th April, 1962, and that during

*"The Truth about Vaccination and Immunisation" (Loat 1951)

the same period vaccinations were responsible for 17 deaths.

Being neither a statistician nor a possessor of the necessary medical qualifications, I will pursue this subject no further, but I think that the Manxman in 1837 who said "If I had twenty children, I would not have the COW-POX put in one of them" had the welfare of his children at heart, very much more so than the parent of to-day, who pushes his only child forward for yet another "jab," hardly knowing what it's supposed to prevent, concerned mainly with the fact that like the others . . . IT'S FREE OF CHARGE.

It would appear that all this controversy in the island concerning vaccination brought about an important turning point in the family tradition, for the old Folk Doctor decided that his son should make himself acquainted with most up-to-date medical practise. The knowledge carefully acquired by trial and error, and the experience of one particular family who had passed this knowledge on by word of mouth down through several generations, had served its purpose and had been of great value in the past. Especially when one bears in mind what Train wrote in his "History of the Isle of Man": "It is recorded that during the pestilence that followed the famine of 1740, there was not a medical practitioner in the island, except the Bishop."

At that time, Bishop Wilson must have been 77 years of age, and with all the commitments of his office I doubt if even this great man, who is such an important figure in Manx history, could have had the time to practise medicine. His flock of 40,000 inhabitants had, therefore, no one else to turn to except the person who could cut certain herbs and mutter some particular incantation.

The witch-doctor who was carrying on the healing tradition at the time of the small-pox plague of 1337, and to whom the majority of the population looked for guidance, was far too wise not to realise that great progress was being made in medical science, beyond the rocky circumference of his native homeland. In universities, medicine was now being taught by some of the keenest brains in Europe, and in research establishments, with the most modern microscopes and laboratory equipment obtainable.

Instead of instilling into his son the medicinal mysteries of the woodlands and the hedgerows, the old wise man sent him away from the rustic environment of his birth, across the Irish Sea to Dublin. Here he concentrated his studies on midwifery, the very branch of medical science in which he had already realised the short-comings of his own father's ability.

Three years after the outbreak of the small-pox, the "Mona's Herald" reported that they had learned with pleasure that in an examination of the Original School of Medicine at Dublin, Mr. John Teare, son of Mr. Teare of Ballawhane, had received a "First Prize Diploma" for his proficiency in practical midwifery.

"Mr. Teare," states the journal, "is a young man of no ordinary attainments and there is no doubt if he commences the practice of his own profession in his native isle he will fully maintain the family reputation in medical science."

It must have been a very proud father indeed whom Train described some time later as a little weatherbeaten old man in shabby old-fashioned clothes made from the wool of the mountain sheep, who went jogging round the island on his Manx pony bringing relief to the suffering.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The "Herb"

The Manx national emblem is generally known, though apparently without authority, to be the ragwort (Senecio Jacobaea), sometimes called ragweed, or in Manx CUSHAG. The common ragwort has many long dark green leaves with jagged edges lying close to the ground, from which rises a dark purplish stem bearing yellow flowers. There are two varieties to be found in the meadows and on neglected ground; one grows to a height of three feet or more, whereas the other is a much smaller plant with lighter coloured leaf and paler flowers.

Throughout the island the ragwort's ability to prevent the spread of infectious diseases was recognised. In quite recent years, and perhaps by the older inhabitants, even to-day, a sprig of ragwort was always worn when visiting the sick, or sometimes was smelled deeply into the nostrils immediately before entering, and straight after leaving, a sick person's bedroom.

This same plant is accorded similar respect in many other countries, and an infusion produced by boiling the leaves in water is acknowledged as an excellent remedy for soreness and ulcers in the mouth, and as being helpful in the treatment of catarrh. I wonder if the old Fairy-Doctor used a preparation such as this for an antiseptic rinse of hands and instruments in his laboratory?

In ancient times people in many different Christian countries used to wear a piece of another weed, St. John's wort, for the religious rituals held on St. John's Day, July 5th, which also happens to be Tynwald Day.

on which takes place the most important annual event of this self-governed island. In a thousand-year-old ceremony on Tynwald Hill, St. John's, new Acts approved by the Manx Legislature, and given the Royal Assent, are made law by being promulgated in English and Manx. This gives every citizen the opportunity of hearing for himself what has taken place in the House of Keys, and the Upper House, although nowadays only a summary of the new laws is read.

The St. John's Wort was traditionally worn for centuries at the Tynwald Ceremony, but over recent years, for some inexplicable reason, the custom has changed to the wearing of Mugwort (Artemisia vulgaris) a much less common plant on the island but of considerable medicinal value. The leaves were at one time dried and ground to a powder, three drachms of which, taken in wine, being claimed to be a speedy and certain remedy for sciatica. The same plant is found in China, where the application of the freshly picked and bruised plant is used for healing wounds.

The most important plant in the lives of Manx folk for many centuries has, however, been neither the Ragwort nor St. John's Wort, but the herb Vervain (Verbena Officinalis) and the superstitious reputation attached thereto has survived the inevitable doubts and misgivings right up to the present day.

"Do you carry the 'HERB,' Denys?" asked Edna in Douglas one evening.

"Which herb?" I replied with the ignorance of one born away from the island.

"Why, surely you know about the 'Herb'?" she said with obvious dismay at my lack of understanding, then hurriedly left the room apparently to rectify im-

mediately the fact that anyone bearing a Manx surname should be found not to have a piece of the Herb in his possession.

"There you are," she said, returning to the room with a small package no bigger than a matchbox. " 'Tis only a small piece, but it will serve the purpose."

"May I take a peep inside?" I asked with mixed feelings of amusement and curiosity.

"Why, certainly," she replied, "and if you take it back to England and just keep it in your home it will do you good." She left the room again, this time to prepare supper.

Carefully unfolding my little gift I found it contained an envelope, inside which was a tiny piece of dry, uninteresting-looking twig and a couple of crumbling leaves.

"What's this all about, Tom?" I asked, turning to my host.

"Well, there you have a little omen of good fortune, a symbol that has been recognised over here for so long that I doubt if anyone really knows how the tradition originated," he explained, "it's called vervain, pronounced in earlier times as vervine."

I then learnt that, even to-day, if any member of the household is leaving on some important mission, such as attending an interview for a job, going to buy a house, or even to take the all-important matrimonial walk up the aisle, a very common last-minute question would be "Have you got the HERB with you?"

That tiny crumpled piece of vegetation in a Manxman's pocket was believed to have power to influence the events of his entire lifetime, the islanders' counterpart to the rabbit's foot.

Since receiving this simple Manx talisman I have

endeavoured to learn more about this small shrub which has become so enshrined in native folk-lore, and very quickly found that its mystic associations stretch far beyond the rocky coastline of Mona's Isle.

Cure For Tumour!

A cure for tumour, based on the principle of homoeopathic magic, was prescribed by Marcellus of Bordeaux, court physician to Theodoius the First: "Take a root of vervain, cut it across and hang one end round the patient's neck, and the other in the smoke of the fire. As the vervain dries up in the smoke, so the tumour will also dry up and disappear."

A writer of the first half of the 16th century, states that in almost every village and town in Germany, public bonfires were lit on the Eve of St. John, around which the entire population gathered, dancing and singing, wearing garlands made of vervain and mugwort. At the end of the celebrations each person threw his herbs into the fire before departing, with a shout of "May all my ill-luck depart and be burnt up with these."

Evidence of the phenomenal virtues receiving credit in England may be seen in a magical manuscript in Chetham's Library, Manchester, of the time of Queen Elizabeth 1st, which supplies the following metrical prayer, to be spoken during the actual gathering of the plant:—

All-Hele, thou holy herb, Vervain,
Growing in the ground,
In the Mount of Calvary,
There wast thou found,

Thou helpest many a grief,
And staunchest many a wound,
In the name of sweet Jesus,
I take thee from the ground. †

Another Manx custom which is comparable with the ceremonies carried out at one time in other parts of Europe, is associated with Mid-summer's Eve, for there was a custom whereby a cart wheel was bound with straw, coated with tar, ignited, and sent rolling down a hillside. This is known to have been performed as recently as 4th July, 1860, and was known in the Manx language as Lhaa Boaldyn (The day of Baal's fire), making an interesting comparison with the mid-summer festival celebrated on the Continent by the villagers of Lower Konz, where a wheel is given similar treatment down the steep Stromberg Hill overlooking the Moselle. Apparently this was some form of Sun-worship, and the successful harvest in the vineyards was believed to be dependent upon the wheel making a complete journey, right down to the river, before being burnt out.

During one of the many evenings spent at Tom's fireside listening interestedly to his childhood reminiscences, I remember once the mention of something concerning sun-worship. He had spoken of going round the village with the rest of the children swinging fire-balls, made of rags and paraffin. He assured me it was not to celebrate Guy Fawkes Night, it was for some other reason about the same time of the year, but he never knew why, and the tradition now seems to be extinct.

† "Lancashire Folk-Lore" (Harland and Wilkinson, 1867).

Strange Procedure

Here again was another strange procedure that merited further enquiry, the outcome of which brought forward the possibility that Tom's boyhood memories bore some remote connection with the Fire-meeting ceremonies of the Druids. In fact, history tells us that about the year 76 A.D. Dothan, son of Duntus, the 11th King of Scotland, left his three sons, Lisimories, Gormachus and Edenus to be educated by the Druids in the Isle of Man.

On the first day of November (Tom said it was somewhere near Bonfire Night), every fire in the country was extinguished the previous night, in order that they might all be lit again the following day by the holy flame taken from the priests.

The swinging fire-balls were certainly very prevalent during the first half of the last century, and are mentioned by various writers of that time; could it be that in that remote village where Tom was born, had been the last dying flicker of a custom that had been recognised for two thousand years?

Whenever our discussions directly concerned my Manx friend's belief in the superstitions held by his country-folk, I always found this attitude to be rather non-committal; although his opinions on other subjects were always outspokenly down-to-earth, his native upbringing seemed to restrain him from any outright condemnation of the old-fashioned and improbable beliefs.

Edna, on the other hand, was equally confident that quaint beliefs of her grandma's day should be treated with complete sincerity.

"Tell him about sweeping the cross-roads, Edna, said her husband as we settled back to the fireside after supper.

"Don't you know how to sweep the cross-roads, Denys?" she asked, quite glad of the opportunity to get a few words in between the male conversation.

"No, I've not the slightest idea what's entailed, but it sounds rather interesting," I replied.

"Then I'll tell you," she began in her quiet homely manner, speaking with the pleasing Manx accent with its slight tendency to rise in a slightly musical manner of the Welsh.

"Sweep The Cross-Roads"

"If your household is troubled with misfortune," she began, "whether it be a sequence of ill-health, business complications or just domestic upsets, you must 'SWEEP-THE-CROSS-ROADS.' Late at night you take a small brush and shovel and go to some nearby junction. Any cross-road will do, provided it forms the true shape of an 'X'. Then starting on the road which points to the direction from which the sun will rise, you sweep a little heap of dirt towards the centre. Repeat this procedure for the remaining roads, moving clockwise, but always sweeping towards the centre. Then you scoop up your four piles of dust and go straight home, but whatever you do, don't speak to a living soul on the way!"

"What if someone recognises you and says 'Goodnight'?" I interrupted, foreseeing several complications involved while running through the night with brush and shovel.

"You just hurry past, without giving a reply; any true Manxman will understand and take no offence," she said assuringly.

"When you reach home," she continued, "you must take your shovelful of dirt inside the house, close all the windows, lock and bolt all the doors"; here she paused, then carried on, giving great importance to the final part of the instruction, "then you throw the dirt straight into the flames of the fire, repeating slowly the words of the charm while it burns."

"But surely this sort of carry-on doesn't go on these days, does it?" I ventured, thinking of the nearby cross-roads, where motor-cycles would go screaming past at speeds well beyond the 100 m.p.h. in a few weeks' time.

"Indeed it does," came the reply, that I feel sure could not be expected anywhere else in the world.

At this point she left her seat to cross the room, and, reaching her hand to the side of the television set, produced a piece of notepaper. "Here are the words, ready for use, whenever I might need them":—

"MAY THE HATE THAT IS WITHIN YOU BURN, AS THIS DIRT DOES, NOW CAST INTO THE FIRE."

Fortunately I was spared the embarrassment of having to express my opinions on the possible merits of trotting through the night with a brush in one hand and a shovel in the other for at that crucial moment there was a knock on the back of the door.

A neighbour had called with news that a little sailing boat, owned by a local businessman should have returned from Ireland that afternoon, but was now several hours overdue, and there was fog out at sea.

"I hope to goodness she's not been run down," said Tom, hurriedly switching on the radio and tuning it to the trawler wave-band where normally the skippers of fishing boats could be calling to each other. "Those big ships go steaming through the fog and wouldn't see the slightest flicker on their radar screens from a wooden yacht. They'd cut clean through her without even noticing," he continued, in a tone which bore a hint of anger amid the anxiety.

Although our fireside chat had become disrupted by this worrying news, there was nothing to be done but wait and hope in a manner that the nearest and dearest have waited the return of the fishing fleet throughout the centuries.

Fortunately, on this occasion the yachtsmen's fears for their comrade's possible distress were unfounded, for the following morning the trim little vessel sailed safely into Douglas Harbour with her occupants unharmed, having suffered no more than the inconvenience of becoming completely becalmed in the fog, and having to stay in that position, off the western coast of the island, throughout the night.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"Charley Chalse"

When John Teare successfully qualified at the School of Medicine in Dublin, in 1840, it did not mean that his father's manner of charm-healing and "cutting the herbs" was to be discontinued. On the contrary, there were two other children who inherited the skilful and spectacular ability to use the family recipes.

One is brought to notice in a few interesting accounts of incidents during the latter part of the last century, but receives no further distinction than being known as "Teare's daughter."

The other, however, was quite an outstanding character called Charley Chalse. The title was the Manx identification of Charles, the son of Charles, just as on the quaysides may be found to-day men who answer the Ned-Billy-Tom (Edward son of William son of Thomas), or even Tommy-Tom-Thomas, where the same Christian name is held by three generations.

Such immense strides had been made in medical progress, and with the services of several fully-qualified doctors now available on the island, it meant that Charley Chalse was no longer faced with the grim struggles to save human life that had made his father so famous.

Perhaps this lifting of responsibility influenced his general outlook and affected his standard of social behaviour, for, unlike his ancestors, he was reputed to have been a very heavy drinker, and has been described as being "often the worse for liquor, though he was seldom if ever quite incapable."

One instance recorded, is of a person visiting his

"Mrs Charley Chalse," Gat-y-Whing.

cottage at Gat-y-Whing with a message that a cow belonging to Mr Kee of Leodas was sick; it had neither eaten nor taken water for several days but continually bellowed in pain. The messenger found Charley was lying on his bed half-drunk, though it was only ten o'clock in the morning. Here we must give a certain amount of credit for that fact that the son of Charles got on to his feet, went straight to his herb garden, took two or three cuttings from different plants, then set off in the direction of the farm. An eye-witness tells that when he entered the shippon, the unfortunate creature turned her head round and looked pathetically towards him. Taking hold of his carefully-selected leaves, he rubbed them in his hands and massaged the moist greenery along the animal's back. Next he threw some leaves on to the ground beneath the beast's nose, whereupon she "let out a final unearthly bellow and quietened down, then began to eat and drink and was all right afterwards."

Though he now held a secondary position as a healer, there was still a great demand for omens of good luck, particularly amongst the fishermen. A bundle of vervain had been an essential item to be taken on board each Manx fishing boat for hundreds of years, and most of the sailors used to take the additional precaution against drowning by having a small piece sewn into their clothing.

The "Lucky Herbs"

The hazardous nature of the fisherman's life made him cling in fear to this and many other quaint old superstitions. The "herb" is still carried to this day,

and I have been told that the membrane that sometimes covers the head of a newborn child (Caul), is still a saleable commodity.

Thus, the selling of sprigs of the "lucky herb" became a leading feature of Charley's vocation, and many stories are told of his escapades in Peel, the home of the herring fleet.

I spoke with the manager of one of the branches of the Isle of Man Bank, who is very well versed in island manners, customs and superstitions.

"My uncle used to tell many a good tale about Charley Chalse," he said, "if only you had started your enquiries about ten years ago you could have picked up a lot of first-hand accounts."

This was lamentably true, for I had already learnt that so many of the older inhabitants, who could have been so helpful on folk-lore and suchlike, had passed away in quite recent years.

"He used to take a sackful of the HERB to Peel, and often spent a month living in a pub, selling it off, a little piece at a time, to bring good luck to the sailors." He paused, then continued with a chuckle, "They say that on one occasion he had sold his entire stock, but became cornered against the bar by a group of rather boisterous seafarers. They wanted some 'luck' before they set sail, and, undaunted, by the lack of vervain, they grabbed hold of poor old Charley, borrowed a pair of scissors from the landlord and promptly cut off one of the flaps of the long-tailed coat he always wore and took it aboard ship with them."

His father would never have tolerated this sort of horseplay, in fact, one of the earlier stories is about the Fairy-Doctor being aboard the Douglas to Ramsey stage-coach on a winter's night when, after descending

the Slieu Lewaigue, it came to a halt outside a public house on the Ballure road. All hands disembarked to go inside and warm themselves with a "cropper," when they found that the landlord was having difficulty with two roisterous farmers. Their heavy drinking had led to bragging, which in turn had brought about a violent quarrel. The unfortunate owner was unable to stop them and, fearing that his premises were going to be wrecked, was very relieved to see that Mr Teare of Ballawhane was amongst the new arrivals.

"I'm as glad to see thee as if anybody had given me a bran' new shilling," he called excitedly, "if thou can't do anything, nobody else can."

In the aged little doctor's presence, the two hefty combatants immediately came to order and humbly received a severe reprimand. But while they had the folly of their ways pointed out to them, the rest of the coach party had remounted and, according to a written account of this tale, the coachman became impatient and shouted, "Come on, we're all waiting!"

"Well, if yer unaisy, go on! go on!" came the reply.

Peace Restored

The coachman urged the horses, but they refused to move until, having satisfactorily restored peace in the tavern, Charles of Ballawhane stepped aboard. The moment he took his seat the horses set off "without a word of telling."

A sequel to the story is that both farmers received some magical form of punishment for their misbehaviour. The first of them to leave for home that

night woke up the following morning to find himself at the bottom of Cornaa Gill, some miles away, and his late adversary fared no better, for he came up against a tree which he proceeded to engage in battle, and ultimately found himself at the roadside with his fists "all swelled and skint."

It seems ironic that several years later, Charley, son of this famous Charles, should meet a tragic death in Ramsey . . . "he came out of the Friendship Inn one night, walked straight into the harbour and was drowned."

After his death his widow continued to practise with the charms and herbs, and in a book by W. W. Gill* I found a photograph (that had not been taken without difficulty), showing her seated outside a cottage at Gat-y-Whing.

> "It was much against her will, for she feared she was committing the sin of vanity, and quoted Scriptures and the Commandment forbidding graven images. She had 'navar-been-tuk-before' and in all probability never was again. Her cottage, in front of which she sat for her portrait, was a good specimen of the type which succeeded the sod-houses—two rooms below and a loft to sleep in."

I have examined the picture, taken about the same time that the Rev. Paton made his visit to the "place-where-the-king-of-the-fairies-lived" and have concluded that two different dwellings had been occupied by father, and, at a later date, son, though only a couple of hundred yards or so apart.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Doctor From The High Seas

The implicit faith held at one time by the natives of the island in their old charm-healers and herb-doctors, those same beliefs which linger even to-day, made it extremely difficult for any bona-fide medico to establish himself in practice in Mona's Isle.

I was puzzled therefore, to come across a reference from the 18th century concerning a Frenchman, Dr. Dominique Lamothe, who had managed to gain acceptance and respect amongst a community which hardly spoke more than a few words of English, and which would, by nature, be most suspicious of any person coming from a country even further afield.

After a few enquiries at the museum, I quickly realised that I had stumbled across a most amazing story of real history, a thrilling epic of adventure on the High Seas that could be carefully pieced together from the mildewed documents of years gone by, to reveal a tale of action and romance far in excess of any fiction writer's imagination.

At this point I must give credit to Mr Serjeant, Archivist of the museum, for the many hours he spent sifting through an assortment of documents which have been deposited in the museum library quite recently after having lain in the safe keeping of the Rolls Office for nearly two hundred years.

The story opens on board a French ship called "St. Lawrence" sailing far out in the Atlantic during the summer of 1760. England and France were engaged in what was later to be known as the "Seven

Years' War," out of which the deeds of Clive in India, and General Wolfe at Quebec, were to go down in history, but the principal factor of the struggle was the question of who could gain supremacy of the seas.

Two great navies were clashing in furious conflict from time to time, but an important part was also being played by the private trading ships. If a schooner could mount a few small cannon and arm her crew with pistols and cutlasses, their trading profits could be very handsomely augmented with a little legalised piracy, and many enemy ships that could be captured and brought back to shore, complete with cargo, merited a sum of prize-money worth fighting for.

The St. Lawrence was a two-masted square-rigged vessel on which had been mounted no less than ten small cannon, her captain was a fiery ambitious man of the sea, bearing the name St. Martin Le Veron, whose ventures as a privateer up to that time had already included the successful interception of "a ship en route to Lisbon from Newfoundland, and a sloop between New York and Maidaira." Many of the crew of 97 had been chosen for their commando-like versatility with both oar and cutlass, and aboard this ship sailed a ship's surgeon who was to become the central character of the story.

A look-out mounted high above the billowing sails searching the horizon for any further potential victims, hailed his colleagues below . . . Orders were shouted, the helmsman altered his course, more canvas was added, and Capt. Le Veron no doubt donned his finest lace and breeches before stepping forth, with telescope beneath his arm and rapier hanging by his side, to take command of the sort of action in which he excelled.

The ill-fated British trader tries to out-run and out-manoeuvre her pursuer but without success; relentlessly the Frenchman closes the distance between them until he is eventually able to fire a broadside across her bows, taking careful aim to avoid damaging his prospective prize. The inevitable end to the action comes when the grappling irons are thrown, and with the two ships locked together, the Frenchmen, armed to the teeth, surge across the decks.

The unfortunate trader was the "Prince Ferdinand," from London, and I'm sure there was little point in Capt. Thomas Gibbins ordering his merchant sailors to fight against such powerful aggressors, only to be hacked to pieces on the deck of their own ship.

An Armistice

An armistice is reached, the unfortunate Englishmen are taken aboard the St. Lawrence and battened down below decks, while the jubilant Le Veron inspects his latest acquisition, removes any items or cargo to which he is particularly attracted, then details a handful of his own men to sail her back to France.

This dramatic incident took place on 29th September, but the incredible audacity of this dashing French captain is only realised when one learns that on the 10th October the same procedure is repeated with the vessel called "Respect," also of London, Capt. Whiting and his crew being taken to be added to the other prisoners. Two days later the hatches are again opened and Capt. King and the crew of his ship, "Dimond," of Bristol, are sent below decks to join their countrymen.

Two crews might have been company, three became a crowd, but on the 17th October, when yet a

fourth conquest was made the planking of St. Lawrence must indeed have been almost bursting asunder to accommodate the members of the "Marlboro," and her master, Capt. Dobson.

There were now four ships on their way to France manned by sailors of the St. Lawrence, which left Capt. Le Veron the difficult though self-inflicted task of not only sailing the ship with a very depleted complement of 32 in all, but also shouldering the additional burden of a large number of prisoners.

Below decks, the heaving mass of humanity sweltered in the darkness until 31st October, when the Englishmen burst forth, and after a hectic hand-to-hand skirmish, in which his second in command was killed, Capt. Le Veron was forced to surrender in humility to the men whom only a few days before he had vanquished.

This exciting exchange of circumstances took place at a position given as "45 degrees 58 mins. long. from London 25 degrees" which is well out in the Atlantic, about 600 miles south-west of the southern coast of Ireland.

Up to this point in the story every incident is supported with documentary evidence, but now we reach the first of many questions, for why should the four Englishmen who now command the French privateer, each one a competent navigator in his own right, decide to set sail for the Isle of Man?

Instead of triumphantly bringing home the tyrant of the seas to either Bristol, Plymouth or London, this seafaring quartet must have had some other object in mind, but a draft memorandum written immediately after the incident simply states, "the said Capt. Veron having surrendered, the English took possession of the

privateer and navigated her to Britain and arrived at Douglas on Sunday, the 9th November, 1760, at 11 o'clock in the forenoon."

The appearance of this foreign vessel, bristling with guns, outside Douglas Harbour must indeed have been a great sensation to the peace-loving Manx population who must have listened with awe as the seamen surged ashore and began to pour forth their fantastic story in the taverns dotted round the town.

The Harbour Master sent a hasty dispatch to the Governor of the Island, explaining the position and informing him of the existence of the French prisoners and ending with the words: " . . . Pray what shall be done with them?

I am, Honoured Sir,

Your most obedient and dutiful servant,

Paul Bridson."

Further documents show that Governor Cochrane and the Manx authorities were taken very much by surprise, and had no precedents from which to receive guidance. The most obvious place in which to house the prisoners safely was Castle Rushen, a veritable Bastille indeed for the Frenchmen, but this caused so much overcrowding that it was decided to release eight of the Frenchmen on parole. This was arranged on the 14th November, on which date a very curious form of bond was signed by the eight officer-parolees, and underwritten by some very trusting Douglas merchants named Messrs. Ross, Black and Christian, who guaranteed the integrity of these eight men who, we may presume, were completely strange and unknown to them. Even the sum of money with which these gentlemen would be required to indemnify in the event of default, was of an indeterminate amount, being stated as:

"such sum or sums of money as is accustomarily given in England for the forthcoming of French officers who are prisoners of war."

This would not be a very straightforward document to prepare, especially as the parties involved spoke either Manx, French or English, but it would be most unlikely that anyone on the island was capable of fluently conversing in all three. This difficulty of language probably accounts for the rather doubtful spelling of the Frenchmen's names, and the fact that the document refers to Pierre Lamothe, Surgeon, whereas other Manx records mention Dominque Lamothe. There can be little doubt that the names Pierre and Dominique refer to one and the same ship's doctor, but the signature on the deed is simply "Lamothe."

Prisoners Cost 6d a Day To Feed

In the museum are the faded copies of the Governor's letters dispatched by sailing ship to England for the attention of the Admiralty, and the Treasury almost 200 years ago, almost pitifully asking what on earth should be done with these prisoners . . . "they are costing sixpence a day to feed and are a great inconvenience," reads one letter.

Eventually the powers in London decide upon the official procedure, and the outcome is that a ship called the "Delight" drops anchor outside Douglas and a certain Lieutenant John Archer presents his credentials to the Governor and takes aboard the unfortunate inmates of Castle Rushen, but is obliged to sail minus one of the eight parolees.

Here again the story poses a question, for which

arise so many possible solutions; for it is known that after his release from Castle Rushen, Dominique—or Pierre—Lamothe, lodged at the house of Mr Henry Corrin in Castletown, and that the young doctor took much more than a casual interest in his landlord's daughter, but we do not know what happened on that 25th day of January, 1761.

Had Lamothe's acquaintance with the young Manx girl over the previous few weeks developed into a force of love so strong that it could make a French officer break his oath? Or had some cold matter-of-fact cash adjustment been arranged with the guarantors, Messrs Ross, Black and Christian? Or was it perhaps the Manx maid herself who in some wily female manner had managed to keep from her sweetheart the knowledge that his presence was required by Lieutenant Archer on the quayside at Douglas.

The following day Lamothe was apprehended and promptly locked up once more in Castle Rushen, and as the British Government was most unlikely to send a vessel to collect one solitary P.O.W. it would appear from this stage of the story that the ship's doctor was to spend the rest of the duration of the Anglo-French war sitting in a dungeon dreaming of his beloved beyond the massive limestone walls.

The fortunes of war had so far been favourable for Lamothe, and even as he paced to and fro between the bare walls of his tiny cell, his future was being debated in a luxuriously-furnished bedroom a few miles away, where a lady of importance lay pale and weak beneath the silken bedclothes. Her response to the efforts of the island's herbal healer of that time was slow, and it was decided to seek the opinion of this young Frenchman in the Castletown dungeon. I

would very much like to think that possibly Old Man Teare of Ballawhane made the initial suggestion on this matter, though such surmise could not be given any supporting evidence.

The Test

The castle gates were opened and young Lamothe stepped forth into daylight to attend what was already recognised as a difficult and desperate case, upon the successful outcome of which would depend his future years, for the listless figure in the sickroom was none other than the wife of the Governor of the Island. Failure of his treatment and the subsequent loss of his patient's life would mean a return to prison at least, coupled with a possibility of considerably greater discomforts being wrought upon him. A speedy return to health by the important lady could, on the other hand, bring about the possibility of a further period of parole and bring Miss Corrin once more into his arms.

This story has a happy and romantic ending, for, just as one would expect it to happen in a fairy tale, sure enough, the Governor's wife quickly recovers, appreciation of his services is expressed in the form of a renewed parole, and very soon the wedding bells are ringing for the doctor and his Manx bride.

The war came to an end in 1763, and Dr. Dominique Lamothe set foot once more aboard a ship, but no longer does he wish to sail the seas as a ship's doctor. This voyage is to take him across to France, where he successfuly stakes his claim to the prize money gained whilst in service on board the St. Lawrence. This amount was considerable, and enabled him to buy a shipload of brandy which he took to Dublin, sold at

an advantage, then returned to his young Manx bride with a veritable pot of gold.

The Hon. Basil Cochrane no longer held the position of governor of the island, but was kept in touch with the fortunes of his ex-P.O.W. by a letter from a certain John Quayle, an extract from which reads as follows:—

> " . . . the French Doctor was no sooner released from being a prisoner of war than he became a captive to Suky Corrin (his landlord's daughter). He went to France for his prize money, brought a cargo of Brandy to Dublin, and this day returned to his spouse . . . " (This is dated 20th September, 1763.)

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Journey To Castletown

Castletown, in the days of Dominique Lamothe, was the capital of the island, and held many interesting prospects which certainly merited a visit. For there I would be able to see the famous Castle Rushen, and visit the nautical museum—providing it was open at this early time of the year. Most interesting of all, I would be able to call at the Museum of Witchcraft, and maybe hold a conversation with that controversial character G. B. Gardner, who has proclaimed himself throughout the press and on T.V. to be a TWENTIETH-CENTURY WITCH.

There runs a fairly regular service of double-decker buses from Douglas to Port Erin, passing via Castletown, but the possibility of making the journey on the quaint little Isle of Man Railway seemed much more appealing.

I walked round Douglas Harbour, passed the fishing boats moored against the walls (they'd been dredging for escallops that week), then crossed the roadway to the railway terminus. Here I spent a penny neither in the manner with which such an outlay in such an establishment is usually associated, nor to buy a platform ticket, but to buy a combined Isle of Man rail and road services timetable.

At this time of the year there were only four train departures from Douglas per day, each of which sets off in the same direction, but a few hundred yards from the station two of them fork to the left for Castletown and the south of the island, while the others carry on straight across to Peel on the western coast, then north through Ballaugh to Ramsey.

After consulting my penny publication I wandered back to town, having decided to return later in the day for the 3-45 p.m. train. I had a wholesome meal, enjoyed a couple of beers in a quayside hostelry, then sauntered back to where the water lapped against the harbour wall. Even there, where cargo boats are continually coming to discharge the island coal, oil, and all the products required to clothe and feed the population, the water is still so clean and pure that one can watch the fish darting amongst the rocks below.

An assortment of private yachts and motor cruisers rode upon their moorings in the shelter of the harbour: some represented thousands of pounds invested in the quest of pleasure, but there was many a little sailing dinghy renovated and repainted year upon year, that still retained its place within some home whose family could point with pride and joy and say "There's our boat."

One such smaller craft belonged to my Manx friend, Tom, and I could not suppress a slight smile when remembering a little yarn he had told against himself the previous evening. Recently he had been returning after a pleasant couple of hours' fishing further round the coast, but as he proudly piloted his little craft between the opening where the two high stone walls of the harbour-mouth towered high above him, the cheerful putt—putt—putt—of his little engine died away. A very embarrassed Tom then had to try to effect an immediate repair right beneath the ever-vigilant eyes of a humorously-minded harbour master whom he had known from childhood; an embarrassment that was increased tenfold by the switching on of a microphone whereby a very official voice boomed forth and reverberated throughout the dock

side: "Should I telephone to Cammell Lairds for assistance?"

I had become so engrossed in the peaceful serenity of the ships and seagulls in the afternoon sunshine that the minutes had ticked away unobserved . . . the Castletown train was due out in TWO MINUTES!

The station was more than two hundred yards away, and my first instinct was to rush madly round the harbour to a jangle of loose change and keys, jacket and tie flapping in the slipstream and, within the allotted time, buy myself a ticket before diving into a carriage in a state of palpitating perspiration.

This initial urge for exhausting action was quickly held in check, for I was becoming acclimatised to the easy-going pace of the island life . . . I had not seen anyone else running since the day I left England . . . so why should I hurry . . . there would be another train to-morrow morning.

I increased my walking rate slightly and continued towards the station, but I had already managed to convince my own mind that there had never been any particular necessity to go to Castletown that day, anyhow.

I didn't hear a whistle blow, nor the chugging of the little steam engine drawing away at 3-45 p.m., so I walked hopefully through the deserted booking hall to peer onto the platform. Two or three employees seemed to be going about their business in a generally medium-paced manner, and a line of coaches was in the process of being painted bright red for the coming season.

The station clock now read ten to four, the train must have gone. Then I noticed that a couple of dejected-looking unpainted coaches against another

platform; there was no locomotive attached, or even anywhere in sight, but there was a lady sitting hopefully inside one of them. Consulting my penny guide once more I wondered if perhaps this person was making certain that she got a seat on the 4-15 for Ramsey.

Tactfully questioning one of the staff, I learnt that the good lady sitting in solitude was actually aboard the train I thought I'd missed. A ticket was purchased, then I watched as an engine, something like those used for shunting in factory yards, wheezed into sight. After a little hissing and puffing it became attached to the two awaiting carriages, perhaps resembling mobile hen sheds, but nevertheless so picturesque that they are attractions to the holidaymaker.

As I climbed aboard, I heard the name Port Soderick (marked with an R for request stop in my timetable) mentioned between guard and driver, then with a "toot, toot, and puff puff" began a most enchanting journey through the delightful springtime countryside.

The first half mile of the track ran through the peaceful Nunnery Gardens along the bank of the sparkling clear waters of the pebble-strewn river Douglas. Bearing left, it followed the coastline to the south, through woodlands carpeted thickly with bluebells, and out into open country along the cliff top with the breakers dashing far below. Next we plunged once more into cuttings with their steep embankments covered with primroses, growing in wild profusion, producing a glorious blaze of lemon and gold, so vastly different from the traveller's more usual view—miles of barren cinder banks—in England.

The train came to a standstill amid some rhododendron bushes, with their evergreen leaves and large

beautiful flowers, where a notice-board read: "Port Soderick." My fellow-traveller alighted, and from then onwards I enjoyed the privilege of being the sole passenger. The self-satisfying thought that there was a driver, a fireman and a guard all actively employed in my transportation had a too mercenary aspect in that out of four men en route for Castletown, I was the only one who wasn't being paid to make the journey!

There were plenty of healthy lambs to be seen on either side, all from well-bred English stock, much better economic propositions than their old Manx counterpart, the Loaghtyn sheep. The only flock still maintained on the island is now under the auspices of the Museum Management Committee.

The little train rumbled away from Port Soderick, across the Crogga stream, then steadily through the deserted station of Santon, the village where Old Daniel lay at rest. I wonder if he could have withstood 110 years of life at the present-day rate of living?

Next stop was Ballasalla, known mainly as the site of Rushen Abbey, then onward again for the final mile of this delightful journey which ended as pleasantly as it had begun by running along the bank of the tumbling trout-filled water of the Silver Burn.

No-one visiting Castletown can fail to notice the ancient Castle Rushen. Dating back to about 1200 A.D., and made of hard crystalline limestone quarried locally, it still stands clean and square from every angle as possibly one of the best preserved castles in existence.

Throughout at least six centuries, the castle has featured strongly in Manx history, and was occupied by many great historic personalities, but as I walked along the narrow roadway through the town, shadowed

by the solid grey ramparts, I looked up and thought of more recent times, when this became the island's prison, and wondered from which tiny window the Frenchman, Dominique De Lamothe, had looked longingly down towards his Manx sweetheart on the cobblestones below.

Walking further round the outer perimeter, which is in actual fact the town's main thoroughfare, I saw the well-known clock that is said to have been presented by Queen Elizabeth I in 1597. It's a single-fingered dial, a characteristic feature of that date, still keeps accurate time, but so many replacements have probably been necessary over such a long period that it might now be comparable to the family axe that still chops wood in spite of having three new shafts and four new heads.

I continued along the street, so narrow that the local buses cannot be accommodated, until the tiny shops and houses that had huddled so closely together under the shelter of the castle become more loosely distributed. Soon I was again in the countryside, for Castletown is little more than a village by English standards, and ahead I could see the silhouetted outline of a ruined windmill.

This old tower, the existence of which is mentioned in court records of 1611, is now known as the "WITCH'S MILL," and had witchcraft associations long before the arrival of Mr Gardner and his museum collection. The story is told that after the mill was gutted by fire in the last century, the ruins became the dancing ground of the Arbory witches who lived close by.

Leaving the highway, I strode towards the huge cylindrical column of stone and stepped right into a

wide opening at its base through which countless numbers of horse-drawn carts must have passed, beneath the huge rotating sails, in the mill's more active days gone by.

I had seen no one passing through the courtyard of the mill, so as I stood in silent solitude within the roofless ruin, I felt slightly ill-at-ease, for having made an unauthorised entry into private property. 'Twas in this frame of mind, within the stillness of the darkened stonework, that I had no difficulty in associating my thoughts with the midnight hour, when the moaning of the wind throughout the derelict structure would be broken by the eerie hooting of an owl or the uncanny beating of a bat's wings in the darkness.

Perhaps my ancestry of highly superstitious Manx folk was influencing my imagination, but it was certainly with a very English, down-to-earth curiosity that I moved towards a long stone barn where I would be able to examine the relics of the darker ages, and draw my own conclusions about this man named Gardner, who had proclaimed to all the world that he was a TWENTIETH CENTURY WITCH.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Witch's Mill

The long three-storey lime-stone barn by the Witch's Mill at Castletown has been subjected to very extensive modification. Though hardly discernable from outside, the ground floor now houses a most delightful old-world restaurant. Its blackened beams bedecked with relics from the past, and the solid, unpolished wooden tables, a feature in themselves, spotlessly clean with their uneven contours following the shape of the tree trunks from which they have been hewn.

The two upper floors form what is claimed to be the only museum devoted to the subject of magic, superstition and witchcraft in the world. When I mounted the stairway leading from the centre of the restaurant, I encountered a most fantastic display of exhibits, a far more extensive range than I had ever anticipated.

There were glass show-cases containing many hundreds of books and documents dating from the latter part of the Middle Ages to the present day, some written in Latin, others in Hebrew and Greek.

There were curious rings and jewels, medals of gold and silver inscribed with numerals and cabalistic signs. A vast display of "lucky pieces," ranging from a crudely-mounted badger's foot to intricate and costly astrological jewellery made according to the wearer's horoscope. A large number of objects used to ward off the Evil Eye, dating from ancient Egyptian and Phoenician to modern times, and a dreaded "pointing bone" of the Australian aborigines.

Here within this museum was all the paraphernalia associated with ritual magic, cabalistic magic, ceremonial magic, art magic, call it what you like; together with objects concerning astrology, the foretelling of the future by means of the study of the stars, necromancy, usually performed with the aid of a freshly-dead corpse, and alchemy, the mother of modern chemistry. Here were tokens from the days of quests for the Philosopher's Stone, which would turn all other metals into gold, or the elusive target, the Elixir of Life, which would cure all diseases and prolong human life indefinitely.

There were two life-sized tableaux, one depicting the interior of a magician's study of the year 1630 with everything set out for the carrying out of his mystic craft. The other room was formed into a colourful temple with a central altar, standing inside three circles painted upon the floor in various colours . . . all so very mysterious and intriguing to the uninitiated.

Burnt Alive

In one corner stood a small memorial to the Manx woman, Margaret Ine Quane, who was burnt alive, with her young son tied at her side, in the very market-place through which I had passed that afternoon. A nearby case contained some relics of Matthew Hopkins, the notorious "Witch-hunter General," whose reign of terror blackens part of England's history. There were several gruesome instruments of torture, such as were used to cause horrifying pain and mutilation during the interrogation of suspected followers of "the craft." There was a "pricker," a three-inch hand-made pin, of the type which was so

fiendishly in common use throughout Western Europe at one time. The victims were stripped naked and the pin was cruelly plunged into the flesh wherever the slightest spot or blemish could be seen that might be taken as the so-called "Devil's mark." It is said that after a series of painful thrusts, the interrogator would use some sleight of hand whereby only the head of the pin would be pressed against the writhing body, which this time would not emit a further agonising scream, nor would any blood ooze forth . . . this indeed was proof of guilt. No further evidence was required, and from then onwards the unfortunate creature, who was said to possess a spot which did not bleed, and was insensitive to pain, received the most appalling punishment which so often culminated in burning at the stake.

The magnitude of these revolting persecutions is only realised when one reads that in the name of Justice and Christianity the number of European souls, both male and female, young and old, who suffered the extreme penalty in this manner is estimated to be no less than NINE MILLION.

This was certainly a very comprehensive collection, and by the time I had studied the contents of 18 showcases and many individual items round the walls. I realised how very little I actually knew of this extremely complicated but awe-inspiring subject.

Having been so impressed with the wealth of exhibits, in this building, of a subject so often neglected, or completely ignored by the majority of public museums, I now looked forward to meeting the man responsible for their accumulation, the man who claims "the craft" is still alive to-day.

"I'm afraid the 'Doctor' isn't here to-day, but

perhaps I may be of help to you?" said a smart looking young man who seemed to be in charge of the restaurant, and obviously not the white-haired old witch I expected to see.

I gave a general idea of the purpose of my visit and learnt that the restaurant manager also carried out liaison duties between the "Doctor" and his public, or should I say more correctly, anyone who wishes to interview the Witch himself must first of all convince the younger man that he is of sound mind, and not likely to be a nuisance to the "Doctor."

"We get so many people coming to see Dr. Gardner, and as his speciality is such a strange and mysterious subject, it is inevitable that we have to deal with some rather queer people from time to time; some of them want to become witches, some want some sort of spell casting to the detriment of some alleged enemy, others just want to gape out of idle curiosity and do not realise that the 'Doctor' is actually a very busy man."

It must have been my lucky day, for I successfully passed the screening process and was given detailed instructions for retracing my steps towards the town to reach the Witch's private residence.

Before leaving the Mill, however, I asked one or two questions and soon noticed with what great respect and admiration the younger man spoke of the "Doctor," which seemed to be much deeper than any business association, though at the same time he dissociated himself from "the craft."

On the wall of the restaurant I had noticed a frame containing an invitation to Buckingham Palace, dated May, 25th, 1960, which interested me not only because I too had received a similar honour during the same summer, but also because the invitation was to

"Mr" G. B. Gardner. I raised a query on this point and learned that his title is not a medical qualification but "a degree that was conferred upon him in the Far East."

I Meet The Doctor

Wending my way towards the town, I had time to reflect upon the impressions gained so far. The visit to the museum certainly merited the one shilling admittance fee, which, as the solitary visitor of that out-of-season afternoon I had not been charged. The restaurant was certainly very picturesque and inviting, its manager both pleasant and sincere, but out in the courtyard the additional attractions in the form of "Ye Olde Wishing Well," the licensed dance-hall and the notice "Drivers' room" betrayed an eagerness to accommodate holidaymakers by the coach-load. Was this a veritable witch's money-spinner? Was I about to meet Gardner the Businessman, of Commercialised Curiosities Unlimited?

These were the sort of thoughts that ran through my mind as I followed instructions which duly brought me before a low, rough-stoned cottage situated at the corner of two narrow streets. From within I heard the tapping of a typewriter which ceased at the sound of my knock.

"Do come inside, please," said the bearded gentleman who opened the door, his thick white hair standing about his head as he made no endeavour to conceal the fact that my approach had already been heralded by a phone call from the Mill.

I accepted a seat, then we faced each other across the typewriter and I tried to conduct one of those

interviews which always seem to run smoothly on the television screen. The friendly ease and masterful understanding with which he replied made me uncomfortably aware of the blunt clumsiness with which I was putting forward my questions. I think he must have sensed my inexperience, and tactfully eased the situation by offering to show me round his little dwelling. The walls were covered with swords, spears, daggers, cutlasses and pistols, the harvest of a collector's lifetime. There were books in every room, on folk-lore, on weapons, on the Far East, on archaeology, on magic, witchcraft, secret societies and suchlike, but these were not contained in show-cases; they were used for daily reference. Here in this cottage lived possibly the greatest living authority on witchcraft and his correspondence passes to and fro, to the farthest corners of the world.

At the time of my visit I knew very little indeed about G. B. Gardner, but I quickly cast away any thoughts of his possible exploitation of witchcraft and the display of relics purely for financial gain, for here was a scientific and scholarly man, a learned man, who believed passionately in the religion of witchcraft, and maintained his museum solely as an aid to his self-appointed task of washing away the ancient taint of evil with which he claims "the craft" has always been associated—mistakenly so.

Defining Witches

At one time his own opinion was based on the idea that witches were wrongdoers, sometimes even killing for the purpose of raising a Cone of Power under which circumstance a certain amount of persecution would appear understandable. Since carrying out many years of diligent research, however, he has arrived at

a vastly different conclusion which in a most tightly condensed form he gives as follows:—

"Witchcraft was, and on a very small scale still is, that remnant of the old pagan religion which survived the coming of Christianity, and although its adherents might be of any class of society, they were mostly drawn from peasant population of outlying districts. These people lived close to the earth, and their livelihood depended upon the fertility of animals and crops. Hence they continued to do what they had been doing from time immemorial—namely, to follow a religion of Nature and the fertility thereof, and to hold regular festivals at which the concept of Cosmic fertility was worshipped, and the attempt was made to induce it by ritual to manifest upon earth.

"The priests and priestesses who directed these festivals were called Wica, meaning 'The Wise Ones,' and they also fulfilled the function of surgeons, doctors, midwives and psychiatrists. It was these people and their followers who came to be called 'Witches.' The Church found its influence a dangerous rival to her own, and commenced a campaign of extermination against them, the barbarities of which are not pleasant to dwell upon. Its result was to drive the 'Wica' underground, where the cult survived as a great 'mystery-religion.' In a fragmentary form it survives to this day, and I have been initiated into a British Witch coven. Many objects connected with the cult are preserved in the museum, some of them given by present-day witches.

"An important part of the Church's warfare

upon the cult was that of propaganda. Before public opinion will accept hangings, burnings, etc., as being good and righteous, it has to be turned against those who are to be exterminated, and one of the best ways to do this is by fright. Hence the toads, caldrons, and sinister phantasmagoria.

"In actual fact most witches were (and are) quite ordinary people who happened to prefer another and older religion to Christianity, and to be obstinate in their choice."

Having arrived in the Isle of Man with ideas about witches that were now being decried as false propaganda, I questioned the Doctor further on the tales of revolting sacrificial ceremonies, and the disgusting orgies described by writers of the mystic-horror books.

"The workings of the 'Wica' have nothing to do with 'Black magic,' 'Devil Worship,' 'Black Masses,' 'Satanism' or any of the similar matters about which sensations periodically appear (and disappear) in the popular press, causing nervous old people of both sexes needlessly to alarm themselves; matters in respect of which I personally maintain a profound scepticism," came the forthright reply.

The Teares of Ballawhane

This was all very interesting, but the conversation which seemed to keep drifting between witchcraft and the weapons upon the walls, the latter largely due to my own curiosity, seemed to be far removed from the Teares of Ballawhane. With the basic thought still within my mind that the witches were said to cause evil, but the old witch-doctors from the north of the

Island were capable of counteracting their spells, I asked his opinion on the matter.

"Oh yes, I've read a lot about the Teares of Ballawhane and the traditional healing ability that ran for many generations through the family. Unfortunately I have not yet been to that part of the Island, and as a comparative new-comer over here, since 1950, I have not had the pleasure of unearthing anything beyond what already exists in the Island's older records," he replied.

By now we had surveyed his tiny domain and returned once more to the witch's writing room. If the pen is mightier than this array of ironmongery upon the walls, I wondered where the sleek little portable typewriter came in an arms race?

Keeping to the healing topic, Dr. Gardner sifted through items of correspondence which he had apparently been answering on my arrival.

"Here is a present-day example of healing within the 'craft,' " he said, passing me a letter, having first carefully folded the writer's address out of sight . . . "Excuse me doing this," he continued, "but it is essential that all correspondence between members of any coven is handled with the strictest confidence."

Showing me the date, earlier that week, which confirmed his statement that it was an item out of that morning's mail, he then pointed to a paragraph further down the page.

I learnt that this letter was written by a lady witch, or should I say priestess? It was written very intelligently and in a smooth-flowing hand told of her husband's prolonged illness but, quite recently, the coven to which she belonged had decided to call a special meeting to try and help him. They had drawn

the circle, performed the ancient rites, and . . . Hey Presto! the improvement in his condition became noticeable immediately.

Two hours had passed quickly in the company of this most charming, though unorthordox old gentleman who had tolerated the abrupt questioning of someone half his age, with such patience, and who was now devoting the latter years of his life in educating the world in an entirely new outlook towards a topic brought with fear, and suspicion of incredulity.

I was later to learn and fully appreciate the words of someone else who had enjoyed the pleasure of meeting G. B. Gardner. "Indeed," he wrote, "he is one of the sanest men I have ever met," then summarised his opinion with "It is impossible to meet Gerald Gardner without realising that he is a great human being. He radiated friendliness and understanding: In spite of the screaming headlines of the sensational Press, he was quite plainly and obviously a *good* man."

I thanked the "Doctor" and respectively took my leave, passing once more through the cottage doorway, with the satisfaction of having interviewed a "WITCH," one who does not practise "Black Magic," nor even believe in its existence, but one whose philosophy may be summed up in his own words: "THE ONLY REAL MAGIC IS THAT WHICH ASSURES THE HAPPINESS OF ALL."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Inside the "George"

I stepped out of Dr. Gardner's cottage in Castletown with his words still ringing in my ears, and with many thoughts of supernatural happenings running through my brain, but was abruptly jolted to stark reality by the fact that out in the street it started to pour with rain. I hadn't got a macintosh or raincoat. There was no train back to Douglas 'till to-morrow. The next bus wasn't due for over an hour, and I'd had nothing to eat since mid-day.

Taking the obvious solution, I hurried quickly along the wet and slippery pavement, round the side of the castle, and dived through the doorway of the "George." The landlady interrupted her practice session for "double-top," to go to the kitchen and cut a plateful of very welcome beef sandwiches to accompany my pint of bitter. The beer is very good throughout the Island . . . I understand that there is an old Act of Tynwald which is still enforceable, whereby a brewer who is found adding any form of substitution for the basic ingredients of hops, malt and sugar to the beer is liable to have his entire plant confiscated and to spend quite a while in prison.

Being the sole occupant of the parlour, I took a table and chair in front of the fire, pulled out a notebook and began to jot down the happenings of the day. I realised now how much better it would have been had I troubled to read some literature on the Witch of Castletown before actually going to see him.

Little did I know that the 78-year-old gentleman had packed into his lifetime a number of successful careers any one of which, for a man of less drive and

enthusiasm might have been sufficient to merit honourable retirement.

Much of his time had been spent in the Far East; he attained a reputation as an expert rubber planter while still in his 20's. He gained distinction as both anthropologist and archaeologist, spent many years in Foreign Government Service, and is an acknowledged expert on historic weapons. One of the five books of which he is the author, is recognised as being the standard work on the "kris" and other Malayan weapons.

His ability is by no means confined to the use of the pen, for at the Mill I had passed some remark or other to the manager about a model ship, to which he replied: "Oh yes, the Doctor makes a lot of models, some of his intricate small-scale replicas can be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London."

Amazing Story

A recent publication entitled "Gerald Gardner: Witch" by J. L. Bracelin, unfolds details of the amazing story of this man's lifetime, from childhood days until his eventual installation in the Isle of Man. There are his adventures in the Far East, his discovery of a buried city, and his friendship with the poison-arrowed pigmies; there are opium smugglers, spiritualistic seances with Borneo head-hunters, rituals and beliefs of the Malay magicians, spells and invocations, wizards and eccentrics.

His entry into witchcraft as an initiated member of a British coven took place on the eve of the Second World War, but so diligent has been his research into

the history of the cult that his books on the subject are now looked upon as being the most informative for centuries. He is, of course, the first witch to have openly admitted his beliefs and had them published, in consequence of this it may be said that he has been praised, insulted, revered, quoted, televised, persecuted and vilified. But throughout all this, G. B. Gardner has remained a mysterious and almost aloof figure, holding steadfastly to his beliefs.

I wonder how many newspaper reporters have visited his cottage with the attitude of mischievous schoolboys entering a Christmas grotto to give a tug at Santa's whiskers, only to find they weren't made of cotton wool?

My first inkling of the extensive history of these mysterious and unorthodox sort of doings came some time ago, for having expressed an interest in such things a friend of mine had said, "You should go along to the library and get Fraser's 'Golden Bough'." This I promptly did, with the intention of taking a copy home for week-end perusal, and was somewhat taken aback to find the work consisted of no less than seven weighty volumes.

I still came over to the Isle of Man thinking, however, that witches were bad, but now, after spending quite a while conducting my little survey, I was not even certain "which witches weren't witches and which witches were."

The rain had now stopped and the door of the George began to swing to and fro as the locals turned up for their "usual." One young fellow made his entrance, selected a portion of the bar which seemed to require his support and called:

"One Brown Velvet please!"

I watched with interest as a bottle of cider and a bottle of Guinness were merged together in a pint glass . . . What a drink to order, virtually on the doorstep of the famous Castletown Brewery, too!

Anyhow, I suppose stomachs must vary from person to person . . . one man's meat and all that.

Everyone in the George knew everyone else . . . except that nobody knew who I was. An intriguing position in which I felt that the other occupants must have been wondering why on earth a stranger happened to be in the village pub before the tourist season had begun. The notebook in which I had previously been scribbling lay on the table, and possibly increased the silent speculation.

The velvet-lined young man could not long contain his curiosity. He forsook the bar, took a seat by the fire, licked the froth from his upper lip, and, after a brief opening about the state of the weather, came straight to the point.

"Here on business?" he said amicably.

"Well, yes and no," I replied with hesitation, caught unprepared for such a direct approach.

"Casino?" he persisted, the most widely discussed topic of the time being whether the Island was to become a gambler's playground or not.

"No, I've not come to buy the Island," I assured him, although in actual fact, in the course of my travels, the possibility of making my home in this peaceful land of my forefathers had been continually in my mind.

This young Manx native was so eager to get into conversation that I thought I might as well bring the subject round to further my own investigation, for

generally speaking the Manxfolk are rather reluctant to discuss their superstitious beliefs.

"I've been to see Dr. Gardner," I told him, then continued with the question: "What do the Castletown people think of a witch coming to live in their midst."

"Well, round here there have always been witches, fairies and the like, so everyone just accepts him as a matter of course. He's a very pleasant person, you know!" he replied, with considerable emphasis on his latter phrase.

"Do you yourself actually believe in that sort of thing?" I asked.

"Well, it's like this," he started, then paused, "you can't be too careful . . . God's good, but the Devil's not half so bad!"

Charms

This seemed at first to be a very good answer, but I'm still not quite sure what he meant. Anyhow, I brought the question of healing powers into the conversation by asking:

"Do you know any old stories about the fairy-doctors, the witch-doctors, and so on?" at the same time wishing I could have gone round asking this sort of question in his great-grandfather's time, or, better still, to have interviewed my own great-grandfather, whom I never met.

"I don't know much about the older tales," he said, "but have you heard of the CHARMS?"

"A bit," I replied, having not yet revealed my name or the purpose of my visit to the Island.

"Well, last year, I injured my hand in a motor accident and though it was bandaged at the hospital, the bleeding wouldn't stop until I got the CHARM."

"Who gave it to you?" I asked, eager to pick up the trail leading to a practising charm-healer.

"A gentleman in Douglas," he replied, adding, "he's a town councillor too."

"That sounds very much like Mr Quayle of the Melrose Hotel?" I ventured.

"Yes, that's right . . . How did you know?"

I gave a rather negative reply about the world being small, then puzzled young Brown Velvet even further by saying that I myself possessed the same blood-staunching charm. This caused obvious surprise and would have led to much more questioning, had the time not come for me to move off to catch the last bus to Douglas. So I left him, facing another pint of his potent mixture, without explaining that I had not yet had the opportunity of using the renowned "charm" given to me by Ramsey Quayle.

* * *

Back once more, in the quiet solitude of my hotel room, I snuggled half-way into the warmth of my single bed and, relaxing to the support of the pillows, began a casual perusal of my notes. At little shops and post-offices, up and down the Island, I had purchased a variety of scribbling pads and pocket books as required, so that now before me on the bed lay an assortment, in several shapes and sizes, within whose pages was recorded the story of my visit to the land of my ancestors.

There had already been days which must rank amongst the most interesting and satisfying within my

memory. The information gained had been far more fascinating than I had ever visualised and my contact with the "natives" had brought about some most happy relationships. Many new friends had been made, whose company I looked forward to enjoying again in the future.

Although past midnight, I could still hear a few cars speeding along the rain-swept promenade, knowing that for many of the hotel properietors and shop keepers, who work such long exhausting hours throughout the summer, life out-of-season is full of merry social activities.

The booming of the sea is in constant attendance but only in the stillness of night-time does it become noticeable. Lying there, peacefully recalling the stories of old herbalists of bygone days, I was pleasantly aware of the ceasless surging of the waves upon the beach nearby and began to think about the vast magnitude of under-water vegetation waving gently to and fro beneath the oceans of the world.

I thought of the thousands upon thousands of square miles comprising submarine forests that must sway gracefully to the tidal movements. One of these gigantic seaweed species that makes its appearance on the surface is the floating Macrocystis and may actually reach a length of seven hundred feet.

Though man has conquered travel through the air, and now reaches into outer space, more than half the planet that is his home remains virtually unexplored beneath deep water.

Who knows, what profitable harvests of minerals and plant life might await him on the ocean beds?

In years gone by, did the inhabitants of this little Island, with such a limited amount of arable land, take

advantage of the tons of vegetation lying on the rocks of every cove?

Indeed they found more uses for it than we do to-day, not only to augment the fodder for their live-stock but at one time a certain type of seaweed was served as an accompaniment to roast mutton. I knew that Agar-Agar, seaweed of Japan, is imported as an ingredient for liquid paraffin emulsions and other medicinal preparations, but was more interested to learn that Bladder-wrack, so common round the British coastline, was once used successfully in cases of obesity.

The possibility of seaweed being nature's "slimming" remedy aroused my curiosity some time ago, but I was unaware of the manner in which it was supposed to be prepared. However, I gathered a couple of handfulls, not far from Liverpool, rinsed them well in fresh water, boiled for half an hour then enthusiastically served the ensuing bulk onto a plate containing meat and vegetables.

What a disappointment! My opinion of the tasteless, dismal-looking mass of greenstuff was reflected in one pathetic glance from the red-rimmed eyes of my faithful Boxer dog who, later on, declined to finish off the helping and turned towards me bearing an expression of having suffered some great injustice.

Seaweed, has however, been recognised for many centuries as beneficial to sufferers from rheumatism and allied ailments by its addition to bathwater. In coastal regions in many parts of the world inhabitants have long enjoyed the soothing warmth of seaweed footbaths at the end of tiring days. Indeed, at one time, the soaking of a lady's hands in such a solution formed an important part of her beautifying ritual, to

alleviate that coarse hardness brought about by rough domestic chores.

To-day, with modern methods of packaging and postage, it is possible to have this remedy from nature delivered straight into your home. The harvest is gathered fresh from the sea, dried in wind and sun shine, then, after further de-hydration ground finely into powder.

Switching off the bedside lamp I nestled deeper into the clothes and, gently soothed by the muffled sound of the distant breakers, my thoughts of seaweed and witch-doctors swirled around into the oblivion of peaceful slumber.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Eve of Departure

The time allotted for my stay had passed-by very quickly. I had decided to make my return journey by air and already my flight was booked from Ronaldsway to Liverpool. My two remaining days were to be spent by hastily re-visiting friends and thanking my many new-found friends for their help and hospitality.

Several of them quoted further deeds of the old folk-doctors, tales that had been brought to light in the course of conversations subsequent to my initial visit. Much of this new material showed most interesting possibilities and would have merited detailed investigation, if only my time had been less limited.

I had been invited to spend my final evening on the island with friends Tom and Edna, and had promised to reach their home in time for tea. I felt sure that both my hosts would be keen to listen to the outcome of my enquiries and anticipated an evening of interesting discussion.

Walking by the harbour, to take the road leading to their cosy house, I took one final look in the fading light at the assortment of tiny boats moving in gentle silence at their moorings, for, my return to town would be in darkness and, in any case, Tom invariably insisted upon running me back to the hotel by car, utilising a shorter but less romantic route.

Reaching the front door, after a steep uphill climb, I rang the bell and became pleasantly aware of a certain feeling of confidence. For by now, I had absorbed a wealth of information, through the recollections and opinions expressed by several different

families on the island, and felt myself capable of talking about the strange unorthodox methods of healing, even with the true Manx-bred couple about to entertain me.

A delightful meal was soon consumed, the table cleared and comfortable armchairs drawn closely in position for a fire-side chat.

"Well, Denys," began Tom, eager to hear what thoughts a visitor from England had formed about the quaint superstitions and beliefs of his native isle, "how much do you know about the Teares of Ballawhane now?"

"Much more than before," I assured him, "but I wish my research could have been made years ago, when, maybe I could have spoken to some of the older residents who had actually met such characters as the Fairy Doctor and Charlie Chalse."

"But those two were only the end of the traditonal family line. How about the witch-doctors who practised long before their time?" he asked.

"Most of their stories have been lost for ever," I replied regretfully, "and my only reference has been through some of the rare copies of old Manx history books which have now become so treasured by collectors."

"Did you manage to find out just how long ago this strange ability was first recognised?" said Tom, still questioning.

"Well, no precise date will ever be obtainable. It was certainly several centuries ago," but, I continued, "I have a fair idea about the birth of the tradition."

Then explained that in those days gone by, when the inhabitants of this rocky island struggled for existence in tiny self-constructed cottages, striving to sup-

port their families on a couple of acres of rough, uneven land and fish brought from the sea, sickness and death were constantly at hand.

Somewhere, in the north of the island, there must have been some particular occasion when a crofter, or some member of his family, had been struck with sickness or disease and lay upon the straw, in the poverty of the simple dwelling, while relatives looked on in tragic helplessness. Then perhaps, some chance remark, in the form of most elementary advice, was passed by a friendly neighbour which brought about an improvement in the patient's sad condition and led to an eventual recovery.

Such a deed would not pass unforgotten in the minds of those simple people, to whom survival was the prime concern in life. The friendly neighbour's advice would then be sought by other crofters wishing to ease the sufferings of their kin-folk.

Then perhaps some accident occurred, resulting in a broken limb. Could this kind neighbour offer help in any way, to save the unfortunate victim from a future life of handicap and abnormality?

Spurred by the confidence bestowed upon him, by his fellow creatures, he must have eased the fractured portions into line and attained rigidity with some crude form of splint.

As time went on and further instances arose, his knowledge of the means to help the sick and injured, using common sense and the values of certain plants, began to accumulate. In due course, his son, brought up in a tiny homestead where life's misfortunes were so frequently discussed, would interest himself in the doings of his father, extend his knowledge and

ultimately succeed him as the recognised "village healer."

The island was only sparsely populated at that time, half a dozen cottages would constitute a community, but, as further years went by, the healing reputation would have extended beyond the parish boundary Through several generations the practising of country medicine became a more extensive and accepted art. Then a period in time was reached when the wisdom of the crofter Teare, then practising, attained such popular demand that he was able to foresee the possibility of earning sufficient payment for his services, in the form of vegetables and fish, to justify forsaking his own boat and replanting his land with health-restoring herbs.

He would watch these slowly grow, knowing that by bringing nature's remedies from their elusive hideouts in the fields and woodlands, to flourish at his doorstep, the time so saved could be put to greater use. And so, the circuit of his visits, bringing comfort to the needy, was extended further southward.

Fairy Doctor

In this manner, through still more generations, we reach the days of the Fairy Doctor himself, who, jogging along on his shaggy-haired Manx pony, covered a greater mileage per annum than any other person in the island and in whose garden now grew herbs of such high esteem that superstitious sailors, endeavouring to protect themselves from misfortune, would force an entry in the night to roll upon the damp green foliage.

"You've mentioned herbs, Denys, and also the use

of common sense," said Tom, "but what about the charms?"

At this point Edna eased herself forward in the chair and looked earnestly towards me, wondering if I would now attempt to shatter the beliefs she'd borne throughout her lifetime.

"The utterance of certain words, in association with healing," I replied, "seems to have existed throughout the history of many nations: but I feel that the prime advantage, brought about by the solemn use of these simple phrases, must have been the psychological introduction to the patient of that wonderful possibility that they might be cured." Adding that the will-to-live and regain strength still plays an important part in modern medicine.

Edna seemed about to speak, but, as she hesitated I continued, "I know there have ben many cases of successful 'charming' which seem to reach beyond this explanation, as though some power unknown to man had played its part, but, as many of these charms are made-up of quotations from the Scriptures, I do not consider myself qualified to venture any further opinion."

These words brought silence to the room, 'till Tom leaned forward and slowly poked the fire. His wife gazed silently into the glowing embers, thoughtfully digesting my reply, then, having accepted my diplomatic caution, changed the subject with the question.

"What do you think about the vervain?"

"I've still got your luck token in my pocket," I replied, producing the folded piece of paper with its withered contents, "and, what's more, I've visited the cottage in Port St. Mary. The lady there sends you

her good wishes and has given me some roots of the magic herb to plant in England."

Even the collection of these roots had not been devoid of an atmosphere of mystery. I'd searched, without success, along the lanes and up the hillsides for the present-day link with the ancient past. For here on the island, still persists a belief in the same insignificant looking plant that meant good fortune to the nations who built empires, long before the days of Christ. Admitting defeat, I forsook my botany book and determined to obtain a root of this elusive plant by simply asking for it at an address supplied by Edna earlier in my stay.

Making my way to the south, I arrived in the peaceful, picturesque resort of Port St. Mary where I located a certain cottage near the quayside. Then, introducing myself to the occupant by mention of my Douglas friends, I said.

The Herb!

"I've been trying to find THE HERB, could you possibly let me have a root please?"

"Why certainly, just come inside and take a seat while I slip round to the garden to pull you some." replied the lady, showing me into her spotless sitting-room, with the pleasant courtesy so typical of the older Manx folk.

A couple of minutes later she returned, carrying the precious growth I'd tried so hard to find. After a little conversation I thanked her and prepared to leave, with the greenery protruding from a paper bag into which I'd placed the roots and soil.

"Oh dear!" said the kindly donor, showing signs of slight alarm, "you mustn't take it into the street like

that! No-one must ever be seen actually taking a root of the HERB!"

Straightaway she began to make a parcel, diligently ensuring that every scrap of foliage was most carefully concealed. Thanking her again and, now complying with traditional superstition, I continued on my way, parcel under arm, with the nonchalant air of a resistance worker secretly transporting arms.

"Do you think the old herbal remedies were really as good as we are led to believe?" asked Tom, keen to learn as much as possible in the short time still available.

"There are two important factors to bear in mind," I replied, "Firstly, that in the days when there was absolutely no other form of medical treatment available, even a small percentage of success would be readily acceptable, but, secondly," I continued, "one must consider that if these strange concoctions had been utterly useless, they could not possibly have stood the test of time, which for some remedies has extended over thousands of years."

No doubt the earliest human beings were guided by some natural instinct, just as a sick dog may be seen chewing blades of grass in preference to an appetising meal.

"It seems such a pity," said my host, "that this long-standing knowledge, of the cures direct from nature, should be lost within a couple of modern generations." Thoughtfully adding that even his own little daughter, now asleep upstairs, would never be able to nurse her children with the home-made standbys with which her grandmother had reared a family of ten. Tom could well remember such all-important duties of his childhood as the collecting and careful

drying of comfrey leaves and other plants, but had already, amidst his hectic commercial life of modern day, forgotten the secrets of their simple application.

I listened to his pensive reminiscence of the spartan days devoid of comfort, fifty years ago, when a two-roomed cottage with an earthen floor had housed so large a family. He'd played hide-and-seek around the village, floated sticks along a stream, then scampered home to eagerly await a portion of potatoes and a herring. There had been driftwood on the fire and the homely smell of new-baked bread upon the hearth. There were oil-lamps throwing shadows on the white-washed walls, the bedtime stories and his father's tales from sea. All forming happy boyhood memories from which the simplest things in life brought so much pleasure.

How could the exquisite joy in the heart of a hungry youngster receiving a rosy apple from his dear mother's hard-worked hands, be compared to-day, with chocolate and ice-cream that is given in such abundance?

This final evening on the island reached its termination outside my hotel, where, sitting behind the wheel of his car, Tom said, "You know Denys, I think there's still a lot to be said in favour of the old-fashioned formula for bringing up a family,

Plenty of exercise and good salt air,

Simple meals, fresh from the garden and the sea,

Early to bed and early to rise . . .

and the care of a mother who knows the medicinal virtues of the countryside."

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Farewell to Manxland

Next morning Douglas Bay was bathed in glorious sunshine as I looked down from the bedroom window, onto the sunken gardens which, in a few weeks time, would line the promenade with a magnificent array of colourful flowers. As Spring advanced, the fleet of steamers would come into full service, transporting visitors in their thousands to enjoy the peaceful beauty of the glens and beaches.

Further along the seafront I could see the cenotaph, an angular monument of those troubled times when the clean white superstructures and cheerful red funnels of the Manx boats had been daubed with the mournful shades of grey in a jagged patchwork of war-time camouflage.

I wondered if any passengers ever gave a thought to what fate befell the ships that brought them to and fro before the war? The vessels that sail to-day bear names that are familiar, even to the oldest visitors, but these are modern ships and the heroic deeds of their predecessors may be recalled with great respect and pride. I troubled to find just what befell the previous Mona's Queen, that had given so many holidaymakers the thrill experienced when crossing deep blue water, beyond the sight of land, for the first time in their lives.

In 1940 she went into active service in the mine and submarine infested waters of the English Channel and, when the allied armies became overwhelmed, made repeated voyages to rescue battle-weary troops from Calais and Boulogne. The situation rapidly became more critical, soon the Nazi hordes would be

using those same ports to launch an invasion upon England. At this stage, the late Capt. Duggan, master of the Mona's Queen, received an almost suicidal assignment. He was to sail once more, right into the Port of Calais, and there, under constant bombardment from land and air, was to endeavour to unload a deadly cargo of 300 tons of high explosives for the demolition of the dock-side installations.

Straight into that deathly battle zone the little cruiser sailed and for three nerve-shattering hours the crew and troops worked with feverish desperation to unload the vital, highly dangerous cargo that had taken fourteen hours to carefully place aboard in England. No sooner was the cargo cleared than troops were rushed aboard 'till she could hold no more. Then, as heavy detonations shook the quayside, she sailed for home, the last allied merchantman to leave.

Afterwards, a grateful message from the Calais Port Admiral thanked the officers and men for the magnificent task they had carried out "under most hazardous conditions," and ended with the words "you have the admiration of us all."

By now the remnants of the British army were concentrated at Dunkirk, so yet again she set forth for the danger area. With the mouth of the harbour already obstructed by two sunken ships she was manoeuvred round and, with a fine degree of accuracy under constant fire, steamed steadily astern between the wreckage to collect a load of wounded soldiers from the shell-torn quayside.

With triumphant audacity she sailed safely back to England with her human cargo, turned round and set course yet again for that blood-drenched coast of France. This proved to be her final mission, for, after

surviving a particularly heavy air attack, she struck a mine and according to an eye-witness, "She was lifted right out of the water and broke in two."

Most of the Manx fleet was engaged in that desperate evacuation so this was a tragic time indeed for the natives of the island, anxiously awaiting news of their loved ones. Surely, history was not to be repeated!

Eight ships sailed into World War One . . . Everyone of them was sunk!

The following day the news was even worse, The Fenella went down while loading wounded soldiers, for a shell fell between her and the Dunkirk quaywall and off-shore their colleagues aboard King Orry were caught in a murderous crossfire and also sank.

Twin-ship to the Fenella was the Tynwald, five times she ran that gauntlet of fire to enter Dunkirk, only to reach her ultimate fate two years later in the Mediterranean.

The peace-loving natives of the island paid very dearly for those two World Wars. I hope they will never be called upon again to make such sacrifices. To-day, a new fleet sails and the sole reminders, of the past, are a roll of honour and a host of memories.

Packing my suitcase, I left the hotel in time to board the airport coach for Ronaldsway, thinking, as the countryside slipped by, how quickly the days of my visit had passed, but as the coach crossed over the Fairy Bridge I was unable to suppress a tiny smile. For, sure enough, the driver's hand left the wheel and a finger was raised in salutation to the "little people."

Along the roadway near the airport dozens of young palm trees had been planted, which, in years to come, might present air-travellers with the impres-

sion that they had landed in some sunny, tropical resort. Such trees certainly do grow well upon the island, particularly in Ramsey, but the holidaymaker's sunshine is no less elusive there than it is in England.

The airport offices were of stylish modern design, just as I expected. The main hall, round which were housed the various office-kiosks of the different airlines, appeared to me as a spotlessly clean miniature of other airports I had used. Buying a daily newspaper, the first I'd bothered with since landing on the island, I read of atomic tests and world unrest until a loudspeaker called passengers to step forward and board the waiting aircraft.

Walking across the concrete, paper under arm, I felt that already the charming cottages, the fishing boats and the island's slow-and-easy way of life were slipping far behind me. I'd left that wonderland of fairytales and was back once more into the ruthless efficiency of the twentieth century.

I buckled my safety-belt as the aircraft taxied out across the very place where Ronald once drew up his Viking galleys (hence Ronaldsway) and, as the four throttles were eased firmly forward, felt a surge of power that bore me faster and faster along the runway. Soon the rocky coastline was far below, in half-an-hour I'd be back again upon the industrial mainland, where the population tolerate a daily existence, with headaches and ulcers, as they grope for cigarettes and boxes of pills amidst the toxic fumes of traffic jams. Where lifetimes are spent at beat-the-clock and thrombosis is a major prize, so different from the tranquillity I had left behind.

What would the old folk-doctors with their humble way of life and simple remedies, think of us to-day?